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ISSUE 6

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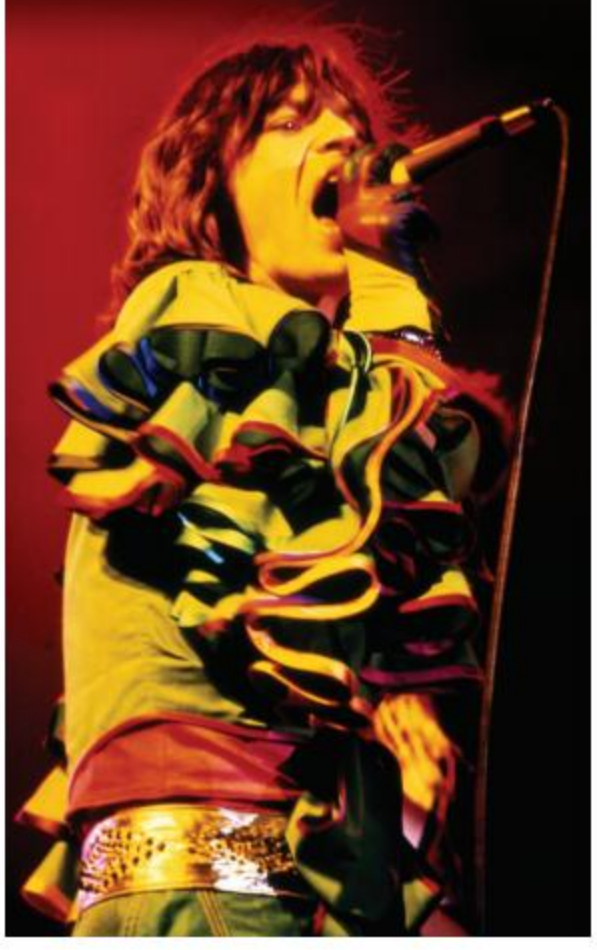

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Welcome to Music Legends. We bring the magic of the digital age to the world of music magazines.

At Music Legends we do not simply bring you the inside story of the greatest bands in rock history, but also showcase an incredible library of documentary films exploring the lives and careers of these amazing artists. In addition to all this, every issue we bring you a free CD to complement our featured artist, these can include rare performances or insights from our coverstars, so keep your eyes peeled for future releases. Find out more about what we have included in this issue, and what makes Music Legends so special below.

David Bowie – Sounds+Visions

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Taken from three amazing shows over three countries, this is the ultimate live collection of Bowie's best-loved hits in concert. The Sound+Vision Tour was billed as a greatest hits tour, during which Bowie was to wave goodbye to his long-standing back catalogue of hit songs. He intended to retire the classics forever, stating they would disappear from live performance following the tour. Luckily for us, there is this incredible record of these shows, and we hope you enjoy listening as much as we did.

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H. Carruthers

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DAVID BOWIE

SOUNDS+VISIONS

David Bowie has always been an iconic pop culture figure and a truly multi-faceted performer. In Issue One we covered the star's time as Ziggy Stardust. Here we continue to follow Bowie's journey, from his time as the Thin White Duke to the legendary Sound+Vision Tour that signalled the end of an era.

In June to December 1974, David Bowie embarked on a mammoth tour to promote the release of his album *Diamond Dogs*. This lavish affair was a high-budget production, featuring stunning theatrical effects and utilising a huge back stage team. The spectacle put the customary rock shows of the time to shame and proved to be Bowie's most successful tour yet.

However, during the tour Bowie became jaded by the opulence of the concerts. He felt the need to move away from the extravagance of the stage shows and the rock and roll lifestyle his music portrayed. He was seeking a new sound, and this he found in the summer of 1974, in the unlikely form of Philly soul.

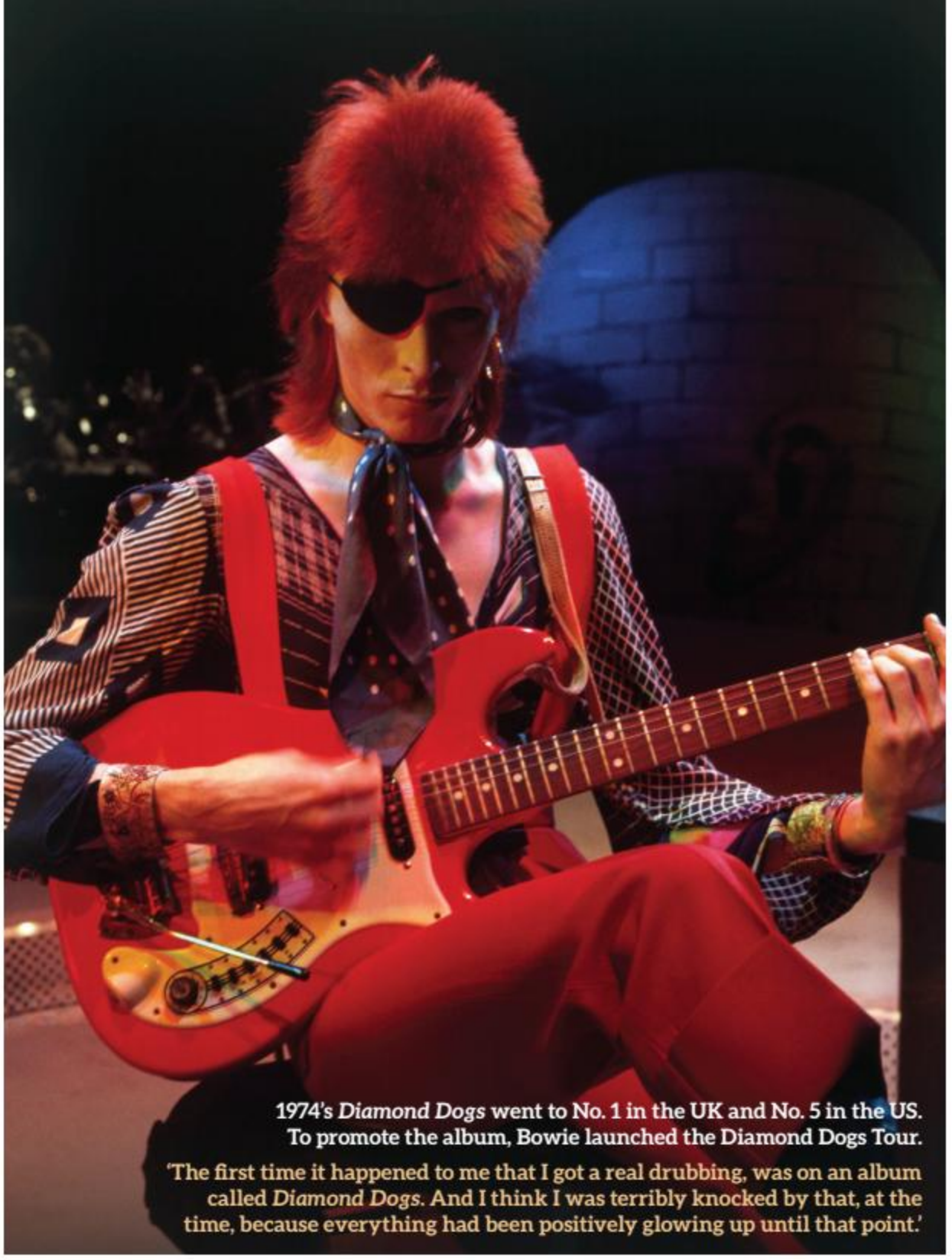
This new area of sonic exploration resulted in the 1975 album, *Young Americans*. Ziggy Stardust was no longer, and in his place came the Thin White Duke. The Duke was a character rooted in funk and Philly soul, although Bowie ironically referred to the sound as 'plastic soul'. Containing his first No. 1 hit in America – *Fame*, *Young Americans* was another considerable success for Bowie, despite being a significant change in direction.

In terms of reviews, *Young Americans* did well, with Janis Schact of *Circus* pronouncing that the production by Tony Visconti was flawless, with 'just a touch of old-fashioned slap-back echo to give the tracks some added mystery'. Marc Bolan of T. Rex talked of the parallels between both his and Bowie's career paths when *Young Americans* was released, stating, **'We've both gone through similar periods and we're both into American black music. There was a time when we were both influenced by Syd Barrett and a period when we both copied Bob Dylan, and it's been a bit like the surrealist movement in the 1920s with all those painters living and working together. David and I are into the same thing. It was him who told me to front the band myself in the way I am now and to stop the fantasy that T. Rex was anything other than Marc Bolan.'**

> ***'What I like my music to do to me is awaken the ghosts inside of me. Not the demons, you understand, but the ghosts.'***
>
> DAVID BOWIE

Bowie recognised the shallowness of this Philly soul period. Yet it still didn't affect his being applauded as a white artist doing black music well, and he was even invited to appear on the iconic *Soul Train* television show. Unfortunately behind the scenes things were not running so smoothly. Bowie featured on the television behemoth *The Dick Cavett Show*, putting in a slightly deranged and violently paranoid appearance. This was thanks to his, now overwhelming, cocaine habit. Bowie's drug use during this period had a huge impact on his personal life and on his career; it steered him towards the sound that became the hallmark of his next three albums.

The first of these albums was the 1976 release *Station to Station*. *Station to Station* saw Bowie return as the Thin White Duke, and featured a bleaker, darker, and, thankfully, more



1974's *Diamond Dogs* went to No. 1 in the UK and No. 5 in the US. To promote the album, Bowie launched the Diamond Dogs Tour.

'The first time it happened to me that I got a real drubbing, was on an album called *Diamond Dogs*. And I think I was terribly knocked by that, at the time, because everything had been positively glowing up until that point.'

complete version of Bowie's soul persona. The album utilised more synths and electronica-based rhythm sections, and leaned towards krautrock for the first time. Claustrophobic, bleak and yet oddly uplifting at times, *Station to Station* was a return to form for Bowie. It was something of a transitional album, combining both the Philly soul of *Young Americans* with an introduction to the synth-led sound of the Berlin Trilogy that followed.

The reviews for *Station to Station* were highly complimentary, and lauded the depth of the sound and lyrics, refreshingly dark after the disappointingly bland *Young Americans*. Richard Cromelin of *Circus* magazine declared that *Station to Station* 'offers cryptic, expressionistic glimpses that let us feel the contours and palpitations of the masquer's soul but never fully reveal his face. If his R&B venture was a sidetrack, he now rejoins the main line'. Adding to this, Cromelin saw the album as a combination of the 'density of *The Man Who Sold the World*, *Hunky Dory*'s pop feel, the dissonance and angst of *Aladdin Sane*, the compelling percussion style of *Young Americans*, and even a trace of the youthful mysticism of the early *Wild-Eyed Boy from Freecloud*.'

Co-producer Harry Maslin also talked about the album in a spring 1976 interview, stating, **'I don't think he had any specific direction as far as whether it should be R&B, or more English-sounding, or more commercial or less commercial. I think he went out more to make a record this time than to worry about what it was going to turn out to be.'**

Thanks to his escalating drug intake and fame, Bowie's emotional disturbance was becoming unmanageable. So much so that in one famous incident, he refused to relinquish control of a satellite to the Spanish government. Bowie had booked the satellite for the worldwide broadcast of a live appearance preceding the release of *Station to Station*, and refused to let the Spaniards borrow it to put out a live feed announcing the death of the infamous dictator Francisco Franco. This was huge global news, and the fact that Bowie could not see the insignificance of his performance in contrast is a testament to his mindset at the time.

In spite of his growing mental instability, Bowie still toured the album in the summer of 1976 on the Station to Station Tour. These concerts were stark and dramatic in nature – a huge contrast from the Diamond Dogs Tour that had preceded them.

Bowie was at his commercial peak, but it was time for significant changes to be made. Inspired by his interest in the growing synth-led German music scene, Bowie decided on a move to Berlin. This was also a chance for a fresh start, he had suffered numerous cocaine overdoses by this point and was desperate to kick the habit. Revitalised, Bowie started work on new projects and began to produce some of the most exciting music of his career. As well as co-producing three albums of his own, Bowie also co-produced solo albums for Iggy Pop (with whom he lived at the time). These albums were the hugely successful *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life*. Bowie also toured alongside Iggy Pop, performing both backing vocals and keyboards for the former Stooges frontman.

Talking about his love of collaborations in a *Livewire* interview in 2002, Bowie stated, **'I'm pretty good with collaborative thinking. I work well with other people. I believe that I often bring out the best in somebody's talents. To not be modest about it, you'll find that with only a couple of exceptions, most of the musicians that I've worked with have done their best work by far with me. You only have to listen to their other work to see how true that is. I can shine a light on their own strengths. Get them to a place they would never have gotten to on their own. There are exceptions, of course, Stevie Ray Vaughn and Robert Fripp to name two.'**

The first of the Berlin Trilogy, and some would argue the best, was 1977's *Low*. The album and its follow-ups *"Heroes"* and *Lodger* were recorded with the ambient magician Brian Eno. Eno's contribution combined with admirable production by Tony Visconti created a distinctive depth and clarity to the releases that remains unparalleled in Bowie's work. Bowie himself has stated that he feels Visconti's input doesn't garner the recognition it deserves stressing, **'Over the years not enough credit has gone to Tony Visconti on those particular albums. The**

actual sound and texture, the feel of everything from the drums to the way that my voice is recorded is Tony Visconti.'

The unique sound created on the albums could be due to the unprecedented free-reign that Bowie afforded Visconti during the recording process. Visconti recalled this musing, **'Bowie wanted to make an album of music that was uncompromising and reflected the way he felt. He said he did not care whether or not he had another hit record, and that the recording would be so out of the ordinary that it might never get released.'**

Originally written off by music critics as too experimental, *Low* has since reaped the critical acclaim it deserves, being named best album of the 1970s by *Pitchfork* and coming in at No. 14 in *Q* magazine's 100 Greatest British Albums Ever list. *Low* is a piece of art as much as it is a piece of music, and it influenced musical trends for years following its release, including the new wave and industrial genres. The album benefits from incredible production, a cavernous drum sound throughout and an insightful economy of words.

The album was heavily influenced, as previously mentioned, by krautrock from the likes of Kraftwerk and Neu!, as well as by more minimalist work as that of Steve Reich. The initial album was a simple, minimalistic, stripped-down affair – a pervasive response to punk rock, revelling in instrumental pieces and using silence as much as sound. Renowned as being way ahead of its time, Bowie denied that the album had been heavily influenced by drugs, stating in a 1997 interview with *NY Rock* that *Low* **'was a relatively straight album. It didn't come from a drug place. And I realised at the time that it was important music. It was one of the better things I'd ever written – *Low*, specifically. That was the start, probably for me, of a new way of looking at life. The first time it happened to me, that I got a real drubbing, was on an album called *Diamond Dogs*. And I think I was terribly knocked by that, at the time, because everything had been positively glowing up until that point. And it really felt like the end of the world to me, I think – which was a pretty immature reaction to it. But looking back at it, three or four years later, I realised what a good album it was. And the same thing happened again in the mid-seventies with *Low*, which went on, of course, to be probably one of the most important albums that I ever made.'**

The Thin White Duke was the persona of David Bowie during 1975–1976.

'No story. Just young Americans. It's about a newly wed couple who don't know if they really like each other. Well, they do, but they don't know if they do or don't. It's a bit of a predicament.' – David Bowie on the concept behind *Young Americans*

Bowie also pronounced that the album came from a different artist to previous years, stating in an interview with Adrian Deevoy from *Q* magazine in June 1989 that, **'I was a very different guy by then. I mean, I'd gone through my major drug period and Berlin was my way of escaping from that and trying to work out how you live without drugs. It's very hard, it's a very tough period to get through. So my concern with *Low* was not about the music. The music was literally expressing my physical and emotional state… and that was my worry. So the music was almost therapeutic. It was like, "Oh yeah, we've made an album and it sounds like this." But it was a by-product of my life. It just sort of came out. I never spoke to the record company about it. I never talked to anybody about it. I just made this album… in a rehab state. A dreadful state, really.'**

"Heroes" was similar to *Low* in many respects, yet slightly more commercial in nature. The album veered closer to prog rock than *Low* ever had, and perhaps it is for this reason that *"Heroes"* lacks some of the same impact. Nevertheless it was undoubtedly a strong release, fitting in and around the Cold War period. The title track of the album still remains one of Bowie's more famous compositions, and has oft been heralded as his pièce de résistance.

Talking about the composition of the album with *NY Rock* magazine, Bowie explained, **'At that time, with the Berlin Wall still up, there was a feeling of terrific tension throughout the city. It was either very young or very old people. There were no family units in Berlin. It was a city of extremes. It vacillated between the absurd – the whole drag, transvestite night-club type of thing – and real radical, Marxist political thought. And it seemed like this really was the focus of the new Europe. It was right here. For the first time, the tension was outside of me rather than within me. And it was a real interesting process,**

Bowie onstage during the Serious Moonlight Tour. Launched in support of the *Let's Dance* album, the shows began in Brussels on 18 May 1983, and concluded in Hong Kong on 8 December 1983. The tour consisted of ninety-six performances across fifteen countries.

writing for me under those conditions. There's something about Berlin. Always throughout the 20th Century, it's been the cultural crossroads of Europe… There's an artistic tension in Berlin that I've never come across the like of anywhere else. Paris? Forget it. Berlin has it…'

In terms of critical success, *"Heroes"* was another hit for Bowie, with Franc Gavin of *Rock Around the World* magazine pronouncing that *"Heroes"* was both sweepingly majestic and at the same time unbelievably depressing. Going on to describe it as a flawed masterpiece, Gavin finished by stating that if *"Heroes"* 'isn't the truth, it ought to be'.

Bowie had been working alongside Brian Eno at the time, and stated in a 1991 interview that, **'The problem with Fripp [guitarist – Robert Fripp] is that he doesn't have a way of abandoning his own style. I've got to be terribly careful about this because I have an incredible respect for him as a player, but that's the difference between him and Reeves [guitarist – Reeves Gabrels]. Eno is the bridge between the whole thing in that way. Eno knows how to stop his flow in a certain direction and create new channels, whereas very few musicians know how to do that. Once they've got a link with their abilities it's all over in a way; they have a style. It's a style that they'll mature with, but it will keep re-presenting itself. Other than Eno, Reeves is one of the few people who knows how to change his streams of thought. He'll present himself with his own obstacles – he doesn't need me to give him obstacles.'**

An extensive world tour followed the release of *"Heroes"* intended to promote both *"Heroes"* and *Low*. Never one to miss an opportunity, Bowie also released an excellent live album of the tour. In the same year Bowie famously narrated Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, and this is still widely regarded as one of the best recordings of the book.

In 1979 *Lodger* followed the two previous albums, and completed the Berlin Trilogy in some style. Featuring the singles *Look Back in Anger*, *DJ*, and *Boys Keep Swinging*, *Lodger* contained no instrumentals at all, a stark contrast to both *Low* and *"Heroes"*. Bringing new musical ideas into the mix, *Lodger* included pieces mixing up both new wave and Arabic music. More attitude was on show on the album as Bowie really cut loose, merging prog rock with straight-ahead rock. It was in your face, down-the-line Bowie.

Lodger happened to be the last album that Bowie worked on with Eno until the 1995 murder/art concept album, *Outside*. Bowie explained, **'Brian and I, had set ourselves the goal of completing a trilogy of albums in the late seventies – *Low*, *"Heroes"* and *Lodger*. We achieved that and we parted most amicably, and then we didn't see each other for fourteen years.'**

Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps) came next. It was a less experimental and more commercially viable album, integrating both the ideas of the Berlin Trilogy and Bowie's previous outings. This 1980 release was considered by critics to be much more musically and lyrically direct, 'the perfect balance'. *Rolling Stone* magazine's 1980 review of *Scary Monsters* praised the darkness of the album's content extolling, 'On *Scary Monsters*, he comes out fighting. Fusing the sheet-metal textures of the Eno trilogy into something darker and more dense, Bowie focuses his attention on a world he helped create… Terse, rocky and often didactic, David Bowie's compositions cut away all illusions of dignity in isolation, of comfort in crowds.'

Featuring collaborations with the likes of The Who's Pete Townshend and King Crimson's Robert Fripp on guitars, *Scary Monsters* has always performed well in Greatest Albums lists. The 1970s had been an incredible period of highs and lows for Bowie, and the album serves as a fitting coda to the decade.

1980 saw another period of upheaval, as Bowie started the fresh decade newly divorced, clean from drugs and appearing in a three-month run on Broadway starring as the Elephant Man.

In 1981, Bowie worked alongside Freddie Mercury and Queen on the chart-topping single *Under Pressure*. In the same year he made yet another theatrical appearance, this time in the German movie *Christiane F.* – Bowie's music also features prominently in the film, which contains a version of megahit *"Heroes"* sung partially in German, and re-titled *"Helden"*.

Despite all his various passion projects, music was always Bowie's raison d'être and a new album was just around the corner. His biggest commercial release to date, *Let's Dance*, hit the charts running in 1983. The release showed Bowie's talent at moving with the times, and

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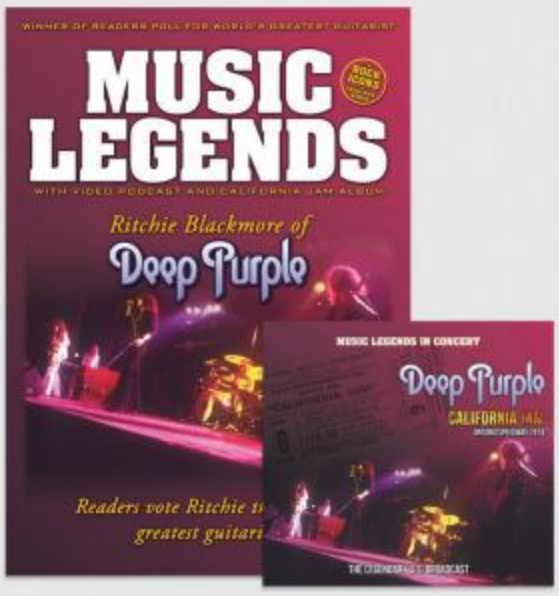

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David Bowie pictured on the Serious Moonlight Tour in 1983.
'I'm just an individual who doesn't feel that I need to have somebody qualify my work in any particular way. I'm working for me.'

predicting the direction in which music was going. This slickly produced dance album was an enormous departure from *Scary Monsters*, and revelled in the 1980s dance music culture. The funky album brought Bowie into the disco scene with a bang, and earned him more success in America than ever before. *Let's Dance* was the right album at the right time, and the title track went straight in at No. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic, heralding a slew of other hits from the album. Despite the huge success of *Let's Dance*, this was as commercial as Bowie ever got during his career.

Talking about the album in a February 1997 interview with *NY Rock*, Bowie explained, **'A number of people have said that album has in spirit the same feeling as the *Young Americans* album. I would agree, but I think the balance has changed somewhat. On *Young Americans*, I was so overwhelmed by the Philadelphia sound… that I was writing songs specifically to point out the rhythm & blues and soul elements… This time around, in *Let's Dance*, I think it's far more a case of my working with rhythm & blues to enhance the songs themselves. The approach is kind of the other way around from that of the *Young Americans* period.'**

Off the back of the album's success, Bowie went on the Serious Moonlight Tour, supported by Earl Slick, after his original support act Stevie Ray Vaughan pulled out over a pay dispute. The tour proved an enormous success, and one single performance alone at the US Festival earned Bowie a cool one million dollars.

Talking about Bowie's performance at the Brussels Voorst National Festival in the May 1983 issue of *NME*, Charles Shaar Murray pronounced Bowie's voice to be as good as ever, with no sustainable damage to note to his skills, presence, or charisma. He added that 'Bowie has created a show that lives up rather than down to expectations. Not on the basis of his legend or his publicity, but on the strength of this show, Bowie is the finest white pop performer alive. I'll be very surprised to see any of Bowie's alleged peers produce anything remotely this good for quite some time to come.'

Unfortunately the bubble had to burst sometime, and Bowie's next release failed to glisten. Rushing out another dance-influenced follow-up to *Let's Dance* with 1984's *Tonight*, there were signs that the star was running out of ideas. With dashed-off production and poor covers, *Loving the Alien* and *Blue Jean* proved to be the only noteworthy tracks worth listening to. Particular flops worth mentioning were the languid *Don't Look Down* (an Iggy Pop cover), *God Only Knows* (a substandard Beach Boys cover featuring Tina Turner) and *Dancing with the Big Boys*, which is consistently, voted one of the worst songs of Bowie's career by fans.

In an autumn interview with Charles Shaar Murray of *NME*, he himself stated, **'I suppose the most obvious thing about the new album is that there's not the usual amount of writing on it from me. I wanted to keep my hand in, so to speak, and go back in the studio – but I didn't really, as if I had enough new things of my own because of the tour. I can't write on tour, and there wasn't really enough preparation afterwards to write anything that I felt was really worth putting down, and I didn't want to put out things that "would do", so there are two or three that I felt were good things to do and the other stuff… What I suppose I really wanted to do was to work with Iggy again, that's something I've not done for a long time. And Iggy wanted us to do something together. We're ultimately leading up, I hope, to me doing his next album. We've been talking about it for a year or so and we've got him off the road. He's not on the road now and he won't be going back on the road for a while.'** It was indeed with Iggy Pop that Bowie co-wrote both *Neighbourhood Threat* and *Tonight*, both off Iggy Pop's *Lust for Life*, that were remixed as dance versions on the *Tonight* album. Bowie finished by stating, **'The interesting thing about rock is that you never think that it's going to go on for much longer. Then when you find that it has… I'm thirty-seven going on thirty-eight and I find myself thinking, "I'm still doing it!"'**

Bowie soon changed his tune, however, as he pronounced only three years later in an interview with *i-D CONFi-DE*'s Tricia Jones that, on

reflection, *Tonight* had been a mistake because **'taken individually the tracks are quite good, but it doesn't stand up as a cohesive album. That was my fault because I didn't think about it before I went into the studio.'**

In 1985, Bowie performed a number of his biggest hits at Wembley Stadium for Live Aid. A video promo for yet another collaboration was also let loose at the event, as Bowie performed a duet with the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger on a version of *Dancing in the Street*, which went straight into the charts at No. 1 on the week of its release.

As well as contributing the theme song to the flop movie *Absolute Beginners*, Bowie also starred in the children's fantasy drama *Labyrinth* in 1986. Portraying the Goblin King, Bowie wrote and performed a number of tracks for the movie, some of which became singles for the seemingly tireless pop singer.

In what proved to be the final part of a trilogy of sorts in Bowie's dance period, *Never Let Me Down* proved to be the worst of the bunch. More hard rock, with a dance edge, the 1987 release was poorly received and actually garnered some of the worst criticism of Bowie's career.

Never Let Me Down was mostly exchangeable eighties pop-rock dirge, with loud uninspired drums, colour-by-numbers guitar solos, and some uninspired songwriting to boot. To sum it up, Bowie himself has since reflected, **'My nadir was *Never Let Me Down*. It was such an awful album. I've gotten to a place now where I'm not very judgmental about myself. I put out what I do, whether it's in visual arts or in music, because I know that everything I do is really heartfelt. Even if it's a failure artistically, it doesn't bother me in the same way that *Never Let Me Down* bothers me. I really shouldn't have even bothered going into the studio to record it.'**

He continued to apologise publicly for the album's quality, or lack thereof, in *Q* magazine, June 1989: **'I thought it was great material that got simmered down to product level. I really should have not done it quite so studio-y. I think some of it was a waste of really good songs. You should hear the demos from those albums. It's night and day by comparison with the finished tracks. There's stuff on the two albums since *Let's Dance* that I could really kick myself about. When I listen to those demos it's, How did it turn out like that? You should hear *Loving the Alien* on demo. It's wonderful on demo. I promise you! [laughs]. But on the album, it's… not as wonderful. What am I meant to say?'**

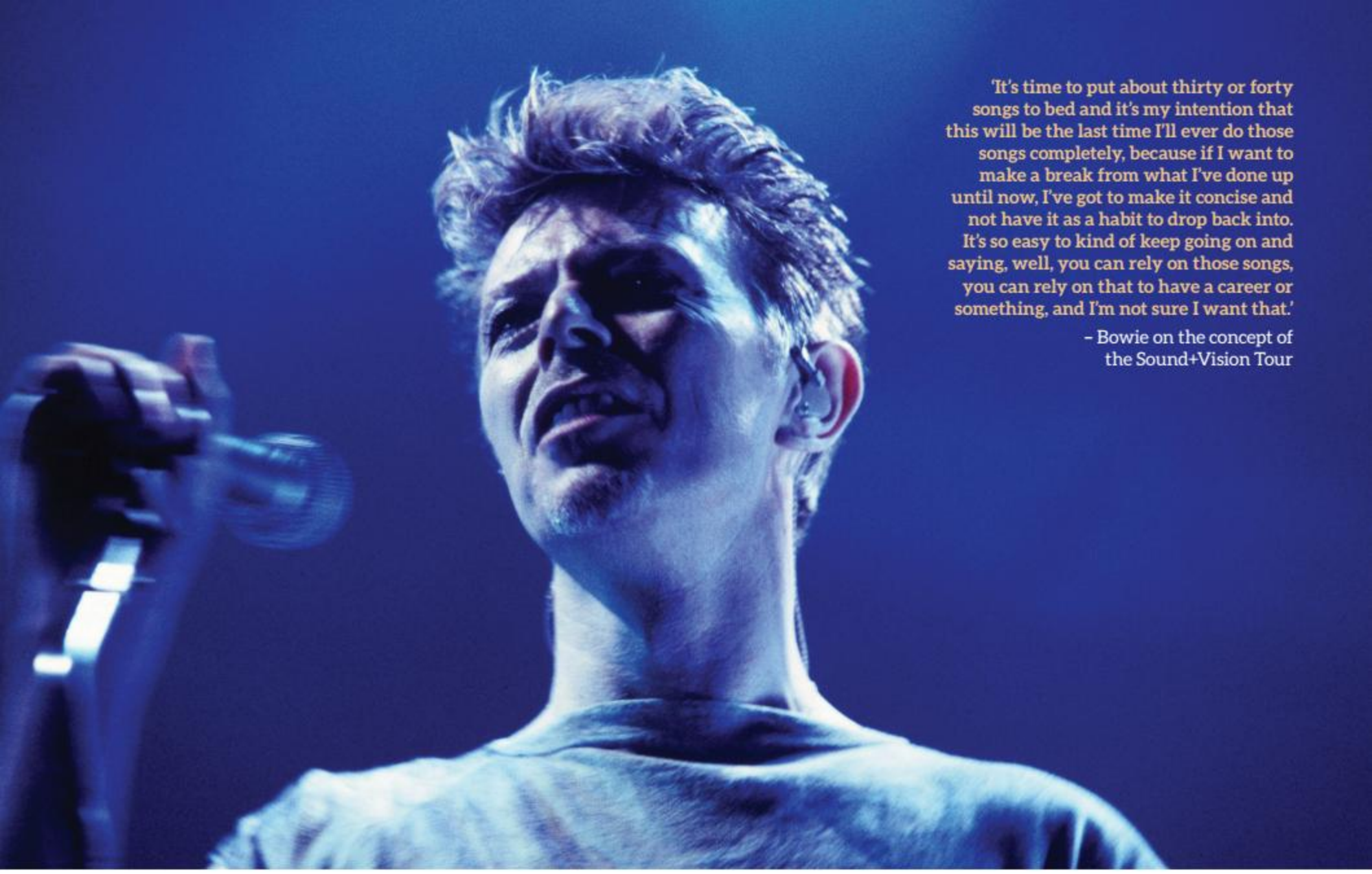
Bowie in performance during the 1987 Glass Spider Tour. Bowie conceived the tour as a theatrical show, including spoken-word introductions, vignettes, and employed visuals.

'I felt I really wanted to back off from music completely and just work within the visual arts in some way. I started painting quite passionately at that time.'

Intended to promote *Never Let Me Down*, the Glass Spider Tour opened in the spring of 1987. The epic string of concerts visited countries all over the world, included dancers and guest musicians aplenty, and proved to be one Bowie's most lavish outings of all time. It was actually so extravagant that critics even managed to come down hard on the tour as well as the album, describing it as overproduced and pandering to the masses' perception of what a concert should be, essentially describing the whole affair as Bowie going through the motions.

Continuing his career on the big screen, Bowie also appeared in Martin Scorcese's 1988 release *The Last Temptation of Christ*, in which he portrayed Pontius Pilate. The famous director has since spoken about working with Bowie remembering, **'I was a little taken aback when I met Bowie. He was one of those extraordinary artists that come along so rarely. There's a song on his album *Low* called *Speed of Life*, and that's the speed at which he seemed to move – his music and his image and his focus were always changing, always in motion, and with every movement, every change, he left a deep imprint on the culture. He was such a quiet and concentrated and thoughtful man, and he was truly humble… he was a sheer joy.'**

Following his latest big screen performance, Bowie formed a regular band for the first time since the early seventies. Unlike the Spiders from Mars, however, the Bowie-led Tin Machine were a hard-rocking quartet. Their premier album, *Tin Machine*, released in 1989, was a considerable success, finding its place at No. 3 in the UK album charts. The critical reviews were mixed, but Paul Du Noyer was overwhelmingly positive in the May 1989 issue of *Q* magazine, stating that the eponymously titled first album was 'a racket' and the 'loudest,



'It's time to put about thirty or forty songs to bed and it's my intention that this will be the last time I'll ever do those songs completely, because if I want to make a break from what I've done up until now, I've got to make it concise and not have it as a habit to drop back into. It's so easy to kind of keep going on and saying, well, you can rely on those songs, you can rely on that to have a career or something, and I'm not sure I want that.'

– Bowie on the concept of the Sound+Vision Tour

hardest, heaviest effort of his whole career'. Du Noyer also gave the album credit for veering 'dramatically off the circular, self-absorbed, pedestrian path he's trudged across the past two or three LPs. *Tin Machine* revives his energy levels and all-round excitement quota by recalling some of the bolder moments of his musical history – *Width of a Circle*, *The Jean Genie*, the most jagged edges of *Ziggy Stardust* – and cops a feel off hard rock inspirations such as Jimi Hendrix and, perhaps, prime time Sex Pistols.'

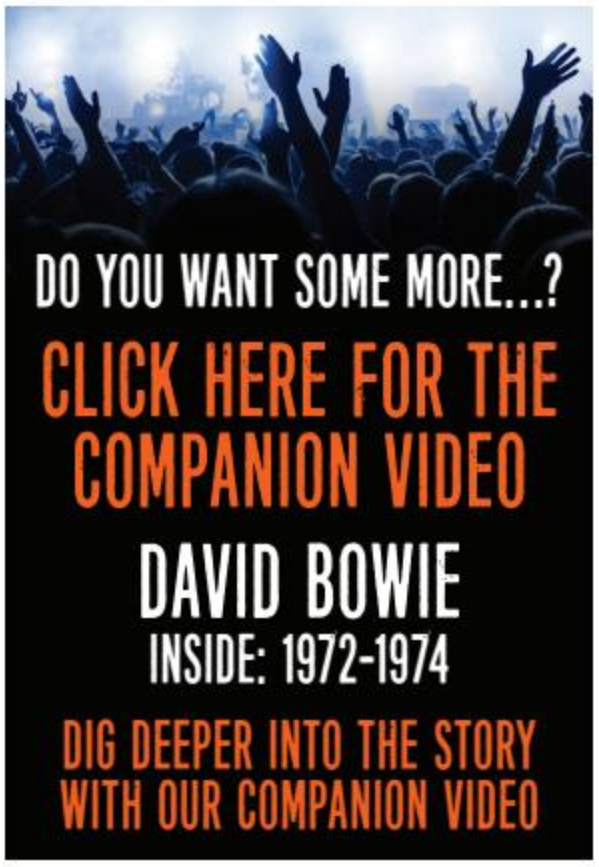
Not all criticism was as warm and the band were faced with harsh comments. **'David said it'd take twenty-five years before people came around to *Tin Machine*,'** guitarist Reeves Gabrels has recalled, **'I remember he used to have the *Low* rejection letter from RCA framed on his wall at his home in Switzerland. They'd sent that to him before it came out, so he'd been through the same thing before. Now it seems as though people are finally appreciating what *Tin Machine* was all about.'**

Bowie spoke of the album explaining, **'I guess, it's not as obviously melodic as one would think it would probably be. It's a demanding album. There's no compromise. It demands your attention… This, for me, is kind of like catching up from *Scary Monsters*. It's almost dismissive of the last three albums I've done. Getting back on course, you could say.'**

Bowie and Tin Machine also toured the album that same year, in spite of Bowie being somewhat unhappy that many of his ideas were either rejected or changed by the rest of the band (and by Gabrels in particular). Regardless of any creative differences, the work with Tin Machine rejuvenated Bowie and ensured he left the decade on a high. As he told *Uncut* magazine, **'I look back on the Tin Machine years with great fondness. They charged me up. I can't tell you how much… Reeves shook me out of my doldrums, pointed me at some kind of light, said, "Be adventurous again"… I've been finding my voice, and a certain authority, ever since.'**

Bringing in the 1990s with the solo Sound+Vision Tour, where Bowie played mostly his biggest hits, the aging superstar seemed to be almost putting a full stop on his career. Still, Bowie wasn't one to bow out either gracefully or disgracefully, as he continued to make music for the rest of his life. Between the Sound+Vision Tour and 2016, Bowie created no less than eight studio albums ranging in style from electronic to neoclassical. His continued involvement in art and music, whilst seriously ill and well into his sixties, was a testament to Bowie's indomitable spirit and his love of expression.

When Bowie died in 2016, tributes poured out from all corners. His impact on culture was immeasurable, and his legacy as an artist, performer and musician remains untarnished. He was a true icon, and will remain so in the hearts of the public that loved him. David Bowie put it best himself when he said, **'I'm an instant star. Just add water and stir.'**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Grateful Dead

Are You a Deadhead?

The Grateful Dead were the cosmic hippie icons that amazed crowds around the world for fifty years with their incredible stage shows. The original jam band, The Grateful Dead are most famous for their onstage presence, but here we look back at their finest moments on and offstage. Do you agree? Get in contact on social media and let us know what you Deadheads out there think.

The Grateful Dead were formed in Palo Alto, California in 1965 – from this year on the music scene was never the same. Famous for their wild extended solos and onstage freak-outs, The Grateful Dead fused just about every genre they encountered in their unique sound. Combining elements of psychedelia, bluegrass, rock, country, gospel, blues and a hefty dose of folk, they were one of the quintessential jam bands. Having played together in various bands around San Francisco, the Grateful Dead took shape when the founder members decided to join together permanently as the Warlocks. After a name change, and a minor line-up adjustment, the original Grateful Dead consisted of Jerry Garcia (lead guitar, vocals), Phil Lesh (bass, vocals), Bill Kreutzmann (drums), Ron "Pigpen" McKernan (keyboards, harmonica, vocals) and Bob Weir (rhythm guitar, vocals). Mickey Hart (drummer) and Robert Hunter (non-performing lyricist) joined the band in 1967, completing the line-up; this remained largely unchanged for the next thirty years.

The Grateful Dead enjoyed phenomenal success, they have sold over thirty-five million albums, been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and have drawn enormous crowds at every stage of their fifty year career. What really made The Grateful Dead distinctive was their incredibly unique sound. Not content to be labelled simply as a hippie rock group, the band was actually incredibly tech savvy. They knew exactly the sound they wanted to create and were willing to even make their own equipment in order to get it. By 1974, they had created an astonishing 'wall of sound' PA. This behemoth was capable of projecting the sound of The Grateful Dead half a mile away without suffering distortion. It has even been said that it was their enormous sound system that prompted Bob Cohen of The Avalon Ballroom to create noise-cancelling technology that was later sold to NASA. The Grateful Dead pushed the limits of what was possible sonically, and inspired their contemporaries to do the same.

> 'When I heard Grateful Dead music, I knew that it was the most powerful force on the planet.'
>
> Mickey Hart

Of course, with this level of experimentation there was bound to be a lot of variation in the music. One never quite knew what to expect from a Grateful Dead release. Many listeners found themselves totally in love one track, only to be left bewildered by the next. As Jerry Garcia put it, 'The Grateful Dead is not anybody's idea of how a band or music should be. It's a combination of really divergent viewpoints. Everyone in the band is quite different from everyone else. And what happens musically is different from what any one person would do… The Grateful Dead had always had that thing of dissonance. It's not always consonant. Sometimes it's dissonant. Sometimes it's really ugly sounding and just drives you crazy.'

It was this unwillingness to compromise, paired with a thirst for progress and an unparalleled live act that made The Grateful Dead the icons they are today. They changed the face of music completely in the sixties, and are still being listened to and talked about fifty-five years after their formation. After all, what is dead may never die.

The Grateful Dead in 1979. Left to right: Mickey Hart, Phil Lesh, Jerry Garcia, Brent Mydland, Bill Kreutzmann and Bob Weir.

'When we get onstage, what we really want to happen is, we want to be transformed from ordinary players into extraordinary ones, like forces of a larger consciousness. And the audience wants to be transformed from whatever ordinary reality they may be in to something a little wider, something that enlarges them.' – Jerry Garcia

Greatest Album
American Beauty

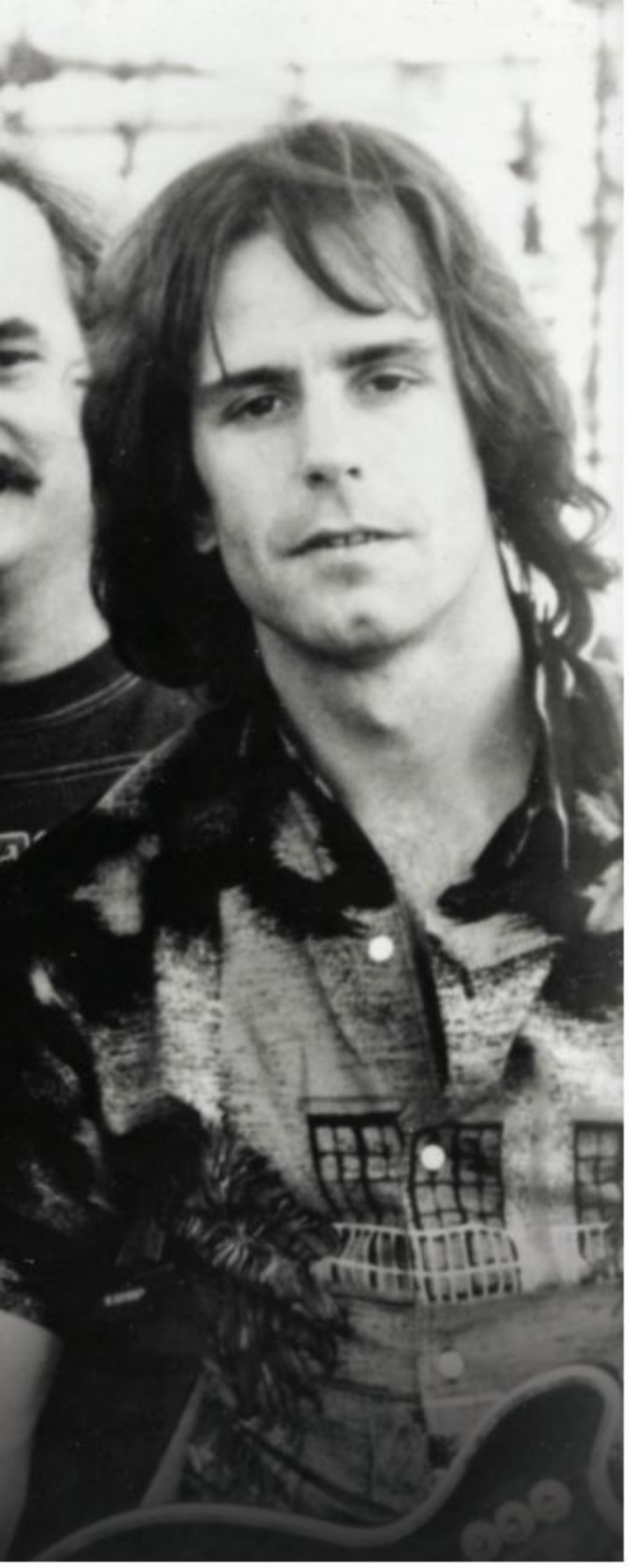
When it was released in 1970 *American Beauty* quickly became the standard for cosmic Americana. Unlike almost anything that had come before, *American Beauty* transported the listener to another place, one that may have existed solely in the minds of the Grateful Dead and Robert Hunter, accessible only through their music.

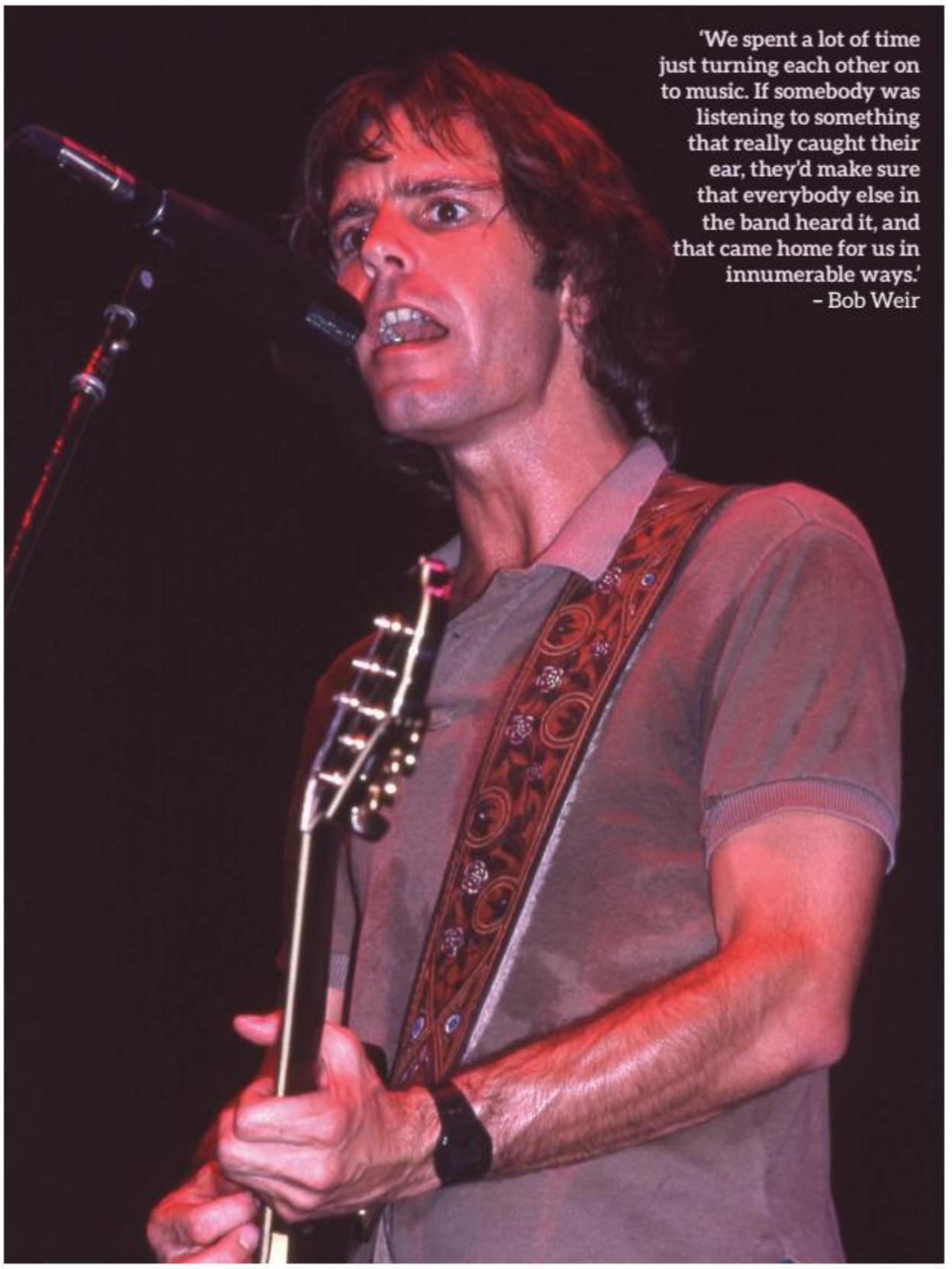
The album is filled with outstanding tracks that traverse multiple genres, from the sounds of the open highway on *Truckin'* to the gentle strains of *Sugar Magnolia* and the anthemic melancholy of *Brokedown Palace*. This was a band at their peak; nothing was off limits, yet everything was executed perfectly.

American Beauty was released hot on the heels of the also excellent *Workingman's Dead*. Coming only five months after the previous release, it not only equalled, but exceeded its illustrious predecessor. One of the key differences in the recording process was that engineer Stephen Barncard took on the usual role of producer Bob Matthews. This resulted in a more concise and focused output, as Barncard has recalled, 'What was unique about working on *American Beauty*, and what sets that apart from any of their others, is that all their support people, bless them, were off somewhere else. It was just me and the band. And I think that's one thing that helped make it what it was. There was no Bob and Betty; there was no Healy or Bear. I'm not saying that these people didn't contribute greatly to the Dead legacy overall, and they're all past and present friends of mine, but it's one thing to look at as why this record is so different. Technically, there was one point of view – mine – not a conflagration of opinions… We got the tracks in a couple of weeks; we did the vocals in two more.'

When it was released on 1 November 1970, *American Beauty* went to No. 30 in the US charts. It also received heavy radio play throughout the year, with *Sugar Magnolia*, *Box of Rain*, *Ripple* and, of course, *Truckin'* dominating the airwaves. The critical reception was also overwhelmingly positive with many critics feeling it was a superior release, yet still a natural continuation of *Workingman's Dead*. Even the notoriously thorny Robert Christgau referred to it as 'sweeter vocally and more direct instrumentally.'

One of the greatest accolades any release can be awarded is the admiration of its creators, and this is certainly the case with *American Beauty*. Speaking of the album Jerry Garcia has enthused, 'It has some of the first things I've written, and that we've performed as a band, that in my opinion are genuinely beautiful.' And if it's good enough for Jerry Garcia, then it's good enough for us.





'We spent a lot of time just turning each other on to music. If somebody was listening to something that really caught their ear, they'd make sure that everybody else in the band heard it, and that came home for us in innumerable ways.'
– Bob Weir

Greatest Song
Ripple

The centrepiece of *American Beauty* – *Ripple* shines as a masterclass in laidback luxury. Robert Hunter apparently wrote the song during the Festival Express Tour in summer 1970 and it certainly shows. You can practically feel the suns rays washing over you, warming your skin as the harmony chills your spine.

The quintessential hippy anthem, *Ripple* is also quintessential Grateful Dead and makes for a wonderful introduction to their music. Often even the sternest critics of the Grateful Dead find themselves irresistibly drawn in by *Ripple* and once the song ends many find themselves delving deeper in a body of work that seemed so inscrutable before.

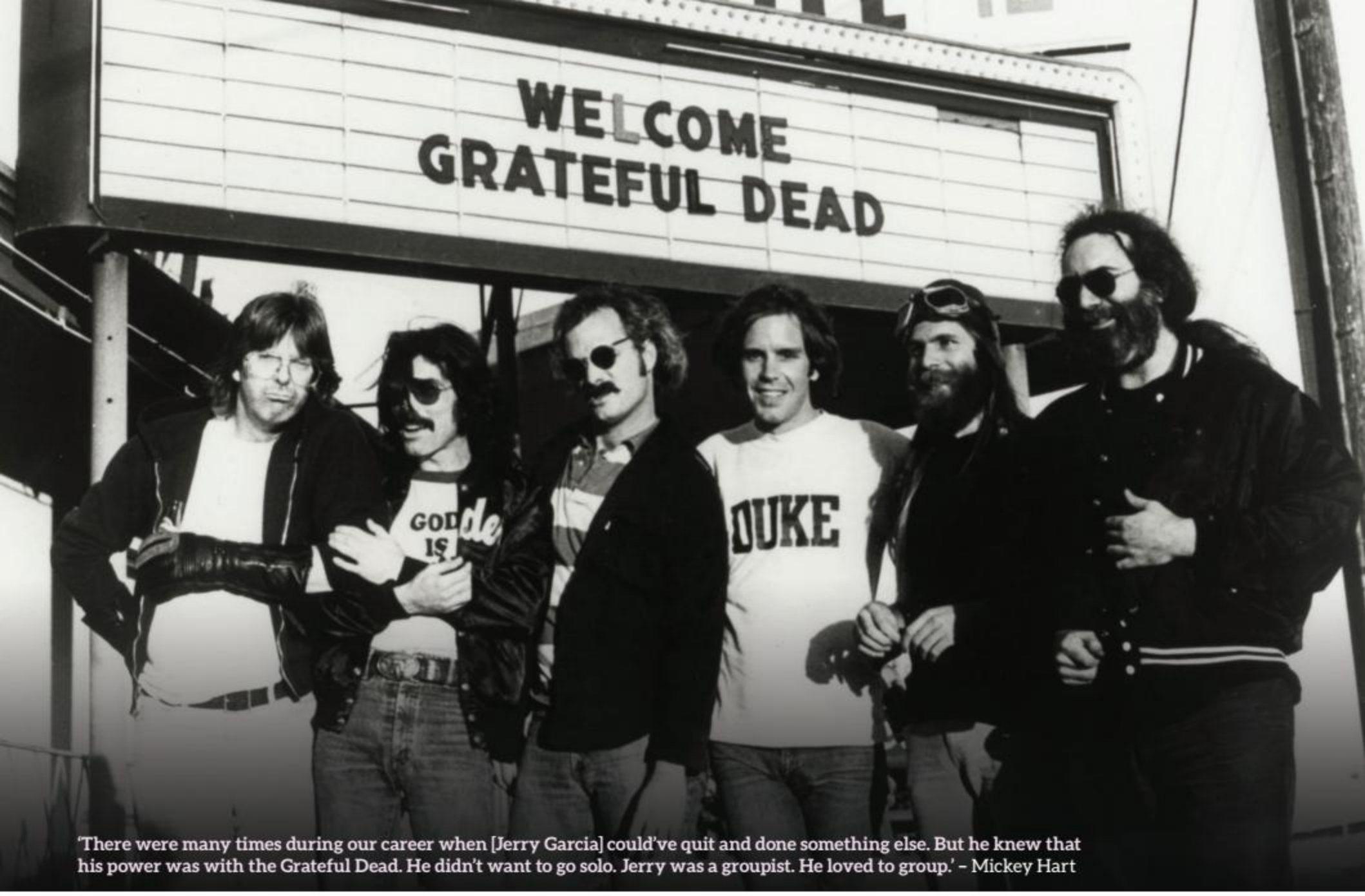
The sunny, relaxed atmosphere that the listener can hear on *Ripple* clearly brought out Hunter's creativity, as he has claimed that he also wrote *To Lay Me Down* and *Brokedown Palace* in the same afternoon.

The soulful lyrics are at the centre of *Ripple*, brilliantly evocative, it is songwriting for a songwriter. Hunter takes us on a journey through the lyricist's process, touching on birth, death and everything that comes in between. Hunter has lauded *Ripple* as one the songs closest to his heart, telling *Rolling Stone* magazine, '"Let it be known there is a fountain that was not made by the hands of men". That's pretty much my favourite line I ever wrote, that's ever popped into my head. And I believe it, you know?'

As the song opens Hunter addresses the listener, asking them to think about the song and interpret it in their own way. 'If my words did glow with the gold of sunshine/And my tunes were played on the harp unstrung/Would you hear my voice come through the music/Would you hold it near as it were your own?'

This is unusually self-aware for what is essentially a folk song, another example of the Grateful Dead never shying away from the unexpected. And the surprises don't stop there. The chorus is set apart from the rest of the song, and is formed by a seventeen-syllable haiku. This really goes to show the level of thought and creativity that was poured in to the lyrics. *Ripple* may have been written quickly but it is no slapdash effort. There is so much to be pored over and digested here that fans are still debating the meaning of the lyrics to this day.

Ripple has remained ever present in the public eye since its release (as the B-side to *Truckin'*) in 1970. This is evident in the sheer volume of cover versions that have been recorded, as well as its frequent inclusion on film and TV soundtracks. In this way *Ripple* has probably done more than any other song to bring the Grateful Dead to the masses – and for that, it secures our top spot.



'There were many times during our career when [Jerry Garcia] could've quit and done something else. But he knew that his power was with the Grateful Dead. He didn't want to go solo. Jerry was a groupist. He loved to group.' – Mickey Hart

Greatest Tour
Fare Thee Well

Although there have been many performances that would be more readily associated with the famous freak-out style of the Grateful Dead, the Fare Thee Well Tour of 2015 is notable for a variety of reasons.

The string of 2015 performances, touted as The Dead's swan song, and a tribute to the legacy of the Grateful dead broke records across the US and demonstrated an insatiable demand for tickets from fans.

When three Chicago shows were announced in January 2015, fans requested a staggering 360,000 tickets. Then when tickets were made available online the next month, half a million people logged on to Ticketmaster, breaking all of their previous records. To accommodate the demand two more shows were added in Santa Clara, California, these saw the band playing to enormous crowds of their hometown fans, and resulted in some truly tear-jerking performances.

What makes this tour so special (despite lacking well-loved members such as Jerry Garcia) is the response from the public. That the Grateful Dead were able to illicit such a reaction after fifty years is a testament to their legacy and longevity. When they performed at Soldier Field in Chicago on 3 July, they broke attendance records there with a crowd of nearly 71,000 fans. In fact demand was so great that promoters even began selling tickets for seats behind the stage. Given that some tickets were being sold online for $2,000 it staggering that certain seats were unable to see the concert at all, yet were still filled. The viewers at home were equally ready to pay to see the performance and smashed the previous pay-per-view record of 160,000 with a staggering 400,000 viewers.

The raw emotion visible throughout so many of the performances on this tour is what makes these performances so special. The 'core four' were determined to bookend the legacy of the Grateful Dead in spectacular style and they certainly succeeded. Enormous fireworks, stunning visual displays and rousing sing-a-longs proved that the band could put on as great a show as ever.

Looking back over the shows now, you can see legions of fans weep as The Dead perform *Brokedown Palace* in Santa Clara, and the force of their admiration for the band as they continued to chant 'You know our love will not fade away' after the band had left the stage following a rendition of *Not Fade Away* in Chicago.

In all, The Dead performed ninety-four different numbers over the five days, only repeating two songs. This was an extraordinary showcase of their incredible back catalogue, and the continued vitality of the performers. It is so rare that fans get to say a farewell to such a treasured act, the opportunity to do this, as well as to thank the members for the joy their music has brought is what makes this tour top of our list here.

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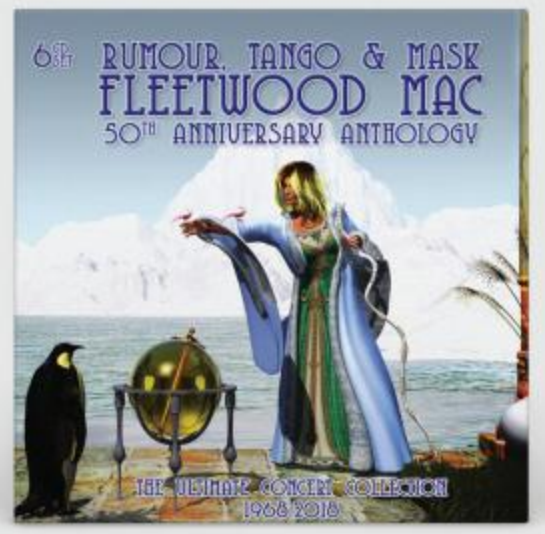

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THE BIG QUESTIONS

We asked and you answered! For each issue we will be putting the big questions to the public. We will be finding answers to the queries that rock fans have debated for decades. Keep an eye on our social media platforms to have your say in our next poll.

This issue we asked...

Who are the greatest metal band of all time?

The results are in; they have been checked, double-checked, triple-checked and verified, and the winner is... *drum roll please...*

METALLICA

In 1983 Metallica exploded onto the scene with *Kill 'Em All*, an in-your-face explosion of thrash metal that blew away audiences. Today they are an unstoppable heavy rock juggernaut that still draws some of the biggest crowds in the rock industry. Despite their enormous success, there have been some serious highs and lows along the way for the group, and here we took at their tumultuous formative years and their subsequent rise to fame.

By 1979 a new type of metal had begun to make its presence felt in the UK with a swathe of bands that emerged from the underground clubs and pubs of the cities – primarily London, Newcastle and Birmingham. Dubbed by *Sounds* editor Alan Lewis and reporter Geoff Barton the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) the new groups played faster, harder and heavier than their predecessors and – despite being signed to small record labels with little budget – slowly made a strong overseas impact.

The leaders of the NWOBHM had been established by 1981 as Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Saxon, Angel Witch, Blitzkrieg and Diamond Head, with hundreds more in their wake. Of this list, Leppard and Maiden went on to carve out enormous careers by the middle of the decade, with legions of fans devoted to their harmonious but riff-heavy tunes and uncompromising image.

The genre quickly found a place in the heart of one young headbanger – the seventeen-year-old Lars Ulrich, a Californian resident who had moved to the US from his home country of Denmark in the late 1970s.

A huge fan of the NWOBHM, Lars had ambitions by the age of thirteen of starting a band, and had been given a drum kit by his grandmother by the time he had entered his mid-teens. Although he didn't master the kit until at least 1981, this didn't deter him from placing an ad in the famed Los Angeles newspaper *Recycler*, which included a 'Musicians Wanted' section browsed by all the city's wannabe rock stars.

One musician who answered Lars' ad was James Alan Hetfield, an introverted but likeable guitarist who was a fan of stadium-rockers such as Aerosmith and Ted Nugent. Hetfield, who lived in a household dominated by the Christian Scientist beliefs of his parents, had little time for the undeveloped drum skills of Ulrich, and their first meeting came to nothing. Nonetheless, the two noted each other's interest in rock music and it wasn't long before they joined up to form a band.

'There is something powerful in Metallica, a will, a drive.'
– James Hetfield

Musically, James was a committed rock fan: **'Probably the most memorable [gig I attended] was the California World Music Festival. It was one of those two-day things. The first night was Ted Nugent and Van Halen, no, Aerosmith. I must have been fifteen or sixteen. I remember following around my buddy, who was selling drugs. He tore up a part of his ticket – it had a kind of rainbow edge – and he cut it into bits and sold it as acid. I was like, "What are you doing, man?" He used the money to buy beer. I was a huge Aerosmith fan. I couldn't believe I was seeing them so close. I worked my way up there as far as I could. There was something magical about seeing them as actual live people, not just pictures on an album. The real coolness of Joe Perry, especially. It's impossible for him to be uncool. And I remember I was blown away by the fact that Steven was calling the crowd "motherfuckers". I was like, "Whoa – are you allowed to do that?"'**

Lars' new band gained some class when a second guitarist, Dave Mustaine, was asked to join. James wasn't willing to sing and play guitar at the same time, and wanted Dave to handle the lead and rhythm parts. This was a task that the precociously talented Mustaine accepted, contributing riffs to the band's small stock of original material while doing so. Led Zeppelin were Mustaine's idols, as he later relayed, **'*Houses of the Holy* was my favourite record, or the Beatles' *White Album*. I would just listen to them and not even realise that I had gone to the turntable to flip the disc. That was just a mind-melding period for me… Led Zeppelin did come through my town once, but this was just after *The Song Remains the Same* had come out and I thought that they were starting to lose it, so I didn't go. I was just becoming a cocky young guitar player at the**

Lars Ulrich onstage in 1988 during the Monsters of Rock Tour.
'Our music comes from our hearts – and it always has.' – Lars Ulrich

time, and I had no idea how much I'd cheated myself.'

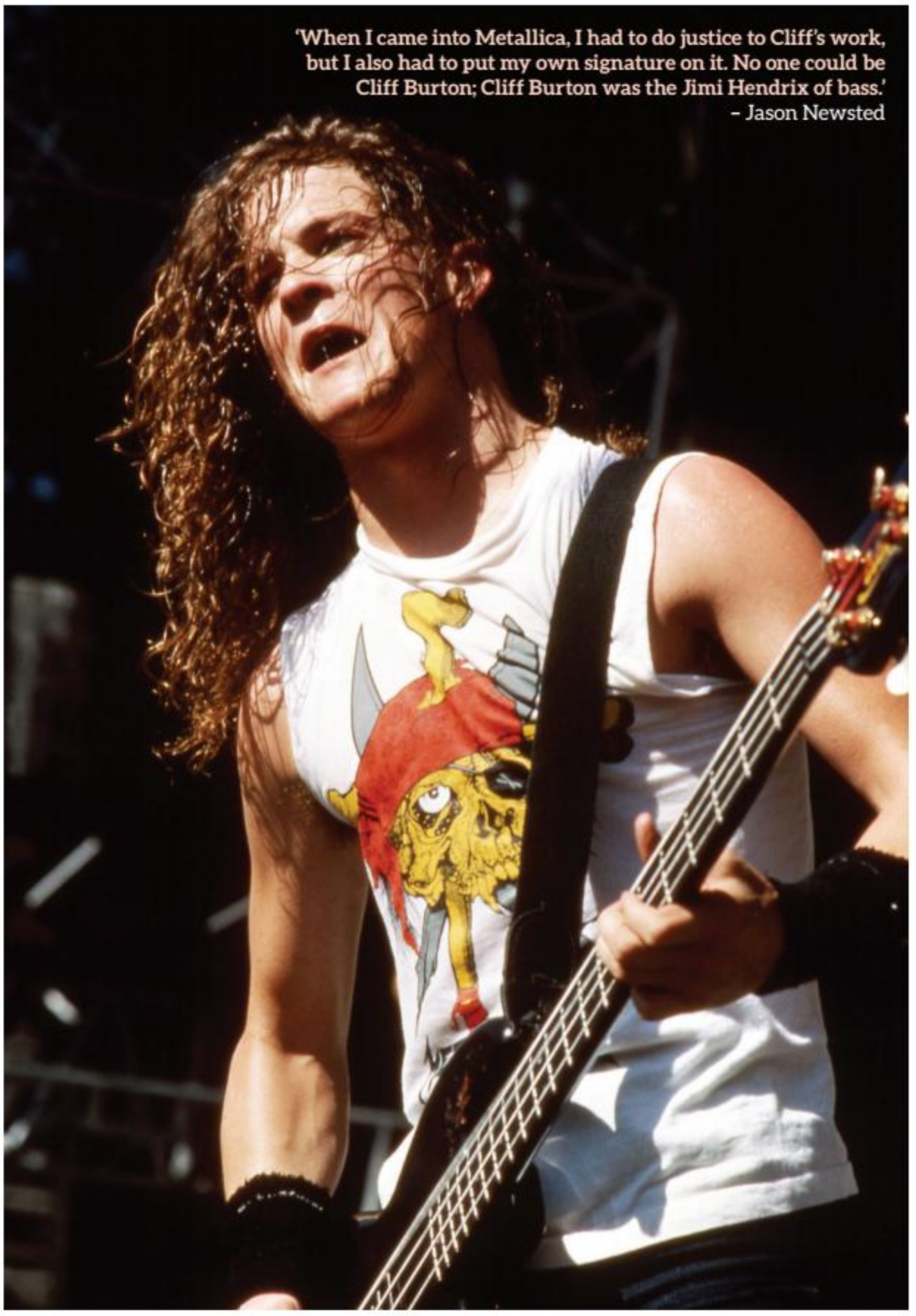
Metallica's original bassist (1981–1982) Ron McGovney took Mustaine's call, explaining, **'We put an ad in *Recycler* saying we wanted a way-out, fast lead guitar player. I answered the phone one day and this guy named Dave was on the phone, and he was just spieling this baloney like I could not believe. Said he had like four Marshall stacks, four BC Rich Biches. But we got him over and he really was a good lead guitar player.'**

Metallica's debut gig came on 14 March 1982 at Radio City in Anaheim, and was a disaster. James was too shy to address the crowd and Dave took an eternity to change a broken string. The dispirited band realised that serious efforts were required to hone an acceptably good act. Unwilling to give up, they threw themselves into songwriting, assisted by James' slowly improving guitar skills and Mustaine's already expert talents. Recording a demo, *Power Metal*, in April 1982, and booking gigs through the summer, the band slowly evolved their act. Their next big leap came after *Metal Massacre* was released on Slagel's own label Metal Blade in June – Metallica were beginning to make a name for themselves.

A better and more widely distributed demo entitled *No Life 'Til Leather* was recorded in July. This was immediately copied nationally and internationally, with the metal scene energised by James' clean, precise picking and Mustaine's devastating leads.

By August 1982 Metallica had realised that with the performing, writing and recording skills of Dave, James and Lars all approaching expert level, Ron had to go. As it happened, Slagel had already told them about a bassist called Cliff Burton, a fantastically talented player in a band called Trauma. As Cliff later told journalist Harald Oimoen, **'Trauma went down to L.A. and did some stuff. While in L.A., Lars and James saw us and decided that they would like to have me in their band. And so they started getting a hold of me and calling me, and I came to their shows here when they played Frisco. And eventually Trauma started to annoy me in a couple of different ways, so I said, "Later!"… It was starting to get a little commercial in different ways, just different general musical attitudes that I found annoying.'**

After a few shows in San Francisco, where thrash metal had taken hold far



'When I came into Metallica, I had to do justice to Cliff's work, but I also had to put my own signature on it. No one could be Cliff Burton; Cliff Burton was the Jimi Hendrix of bass.'
– Jason Newsted

more quickly than in the glam metal-obsessed Los Angeles, Metallica asked Cliff to join them – and he relocated there permanently. A show at The Old Waldorf on 29 November saw local thrash metal act Exodus in support, and was the first time that Metallica met their future guitarist, Exodus founder Kirk Hammett. The show was recorded for the *Live Metal Up Your Ass* demo. The next night was bassist Ron McGovney's last gig with Metallica: he was immediately replaced by Burton and songwriting sessions began in earnest.

Things moved fast, and in January 1983 the band came into contact with Jon Zazula, a record store owner across the country in New York. Zazula had heard *Live Metal Up Your Ass* and was interested in managing the band. An epic, and much-documented journey followed, with Metallica renting a van and driving their equipment all the way across America.

Mustaine, whose drinking was getting out of hand, made the journey more arduous. Hetfield has since remembered occasions when he used to drive the van whilst intoxicated, as he told *Thrasher*:

'If there had been a smash we could have all got killed. All of a sudden, a straight drive out to New York in a U-Haul. There were five of us and we had a mattress in the back… "Get in the back", slam. You're shut in. We'd never been out of California, and we got there to find out we were having some real problems with Dave's attitude. He couldn't really handle being away from home or something… we knew it couldn't go on like that, so we started looking at other stuff.'

On arrival in NYC, Lars and James informed Zazula that a new guitarist would be recruited, and after a show supporting Venom, asked Dave to leave. Meanwhile, Hammett had been approached to join in his place and was already on the way to New York.

Ron McGovney has relayed the incident that lead to Dave's ultimate expulsion from the group: **'Dave had come over to my house on a Sunday afternoon and he brought his two pit bull puppies. I think I was in the shower at the time, anyway, Dave let the dogs loose and they were jumping all over my car scratching the shit out of it (I had a rebuilt '72 Pontiac LeMans). James came out and said "Hey Dave, get those fuckin' dogs off of Ron's car!" And Dave said, "What the fuck did you say? Don't you talk**

James Hetfield in performance during the Monsters of Rock Tour. The festival tour was co-headlined by Van Halen and the Scorpions.

that way about my dogs!" Then they started fighting and it spilled into the house. When I came out of the shower I see Dave punch James right across the mouth and he flies across the room, so I jumped on Dave's back and he flipped me over onto the coffee table. Then James gets up and yells to Dave, "You're out of the fuckin' band! Get the fuck out of here!" So Dave loaded all his shit up and left all pissed off.'

Dave's replacement Kirk Hammett was not only a more mellow character, but also a classic metal player: **'I loved Jimi Hendrix, Kiss, Aerosmith, and ZZ Top, and I felt that if I learned how to play their music, I'd become closer to them, I'd be unlocking some sort of mystery. When you learn how to play someone's music, it answers questions on a musical level, but it remains a mystery on other levels. I just felt that if I made their music, I'd be making a connection to them.'**

The new band gelled immediately, but were asked to leave the Zazulas' house (where they had been partying rather too hard) and move into a rehearsal space. Their new home was grim to say the least, and undoubtedly a far cry from the luxurious lifestyles the band enjoy today. Zazula reflected, **'We put them into this terrible, terrible, terrible, legendary place called The Music Building. They shared a rehearsal room with Anthrax, but they actually slept in a terrible area. It was like a storage place, it was a part of the building where they had all the rubbish. It was a terrible scene, but I had really no choice. I didn't know what I was getting myself into either!'**

The memory of this time has also stayed with Kirk, who has since recalled, **'The Music Building was something else. I found a piece of foam on the ground, and I used that as a mattress to put my sleeping bag on. The people that owned it didn't put any time into it. The place had no hot water. I remember washing my hair in the sink using cold water, it was brutal.'**

In May 1983 Metallica travelled upstate to record their debut album, produced by Paul Curcio. The original plan was to call it *Metal Up Your Ass*, but distributors objected and in response to this *Kill 'Em All* was chosen. Two months later the LP was released by Megaforce in the US and Music for Nations in the UK, with whom Zazula had struck a deal.

Although songs like *Phantom Lord* and *Jump in the Fire* featured devil-worshipping lyrics, it's interesting to note that Metallica abandoned the Satanic angle completely after these songs, perhaps realising that the approach wasn't for them. A high point of *Kill 'Em All* was *Seek and Destroy* – a fantastic number that is even more enjoyable in concert than on record. The importance of *Seek and Destroy* to Metallica's career can be measured in the confidence it gave James as a frontman when he performed it. 'What the fuck do you call that?' he would yell at the crowd after each enormous yell of 'Seek and destroy!' urging them to greater efforts. Live, this song is truly something to behold.

June 1983 saw Metallica touring with British metal trio Raven; the Raven album at the time was entitled *All for One* and so the jaunt was dubbed the Kill 'Em All for One Tour. Songwriting sessions followed and the rest of the year was taken up with the occasional gig and rehearsals back in San Francisco.

A pivotal moment came in February 1984, when Metallica came to Europe for the first time as a band. They toured with Venom through Switzerland, Germany, France and Belgium, then finished with the Aardschok Festival in Zwolle, Holland, the band were supported by Music for Nations, who released the *Jump in the Fire* EP to promote the shows.

Recording sessions followed, this time at the entirely more professional environment of Sweet Silence Studios, Copenhagen, in Lars' home country. Appearing on 27 June 1984, *Ride the Lightning* was a cohesive, stunning piece of work, which established Metallica as the obvious leaders of the thrash metal scene and remains a classic to this day. Keen to capitalise on this success, Metallica released the *Creeping Death* EP

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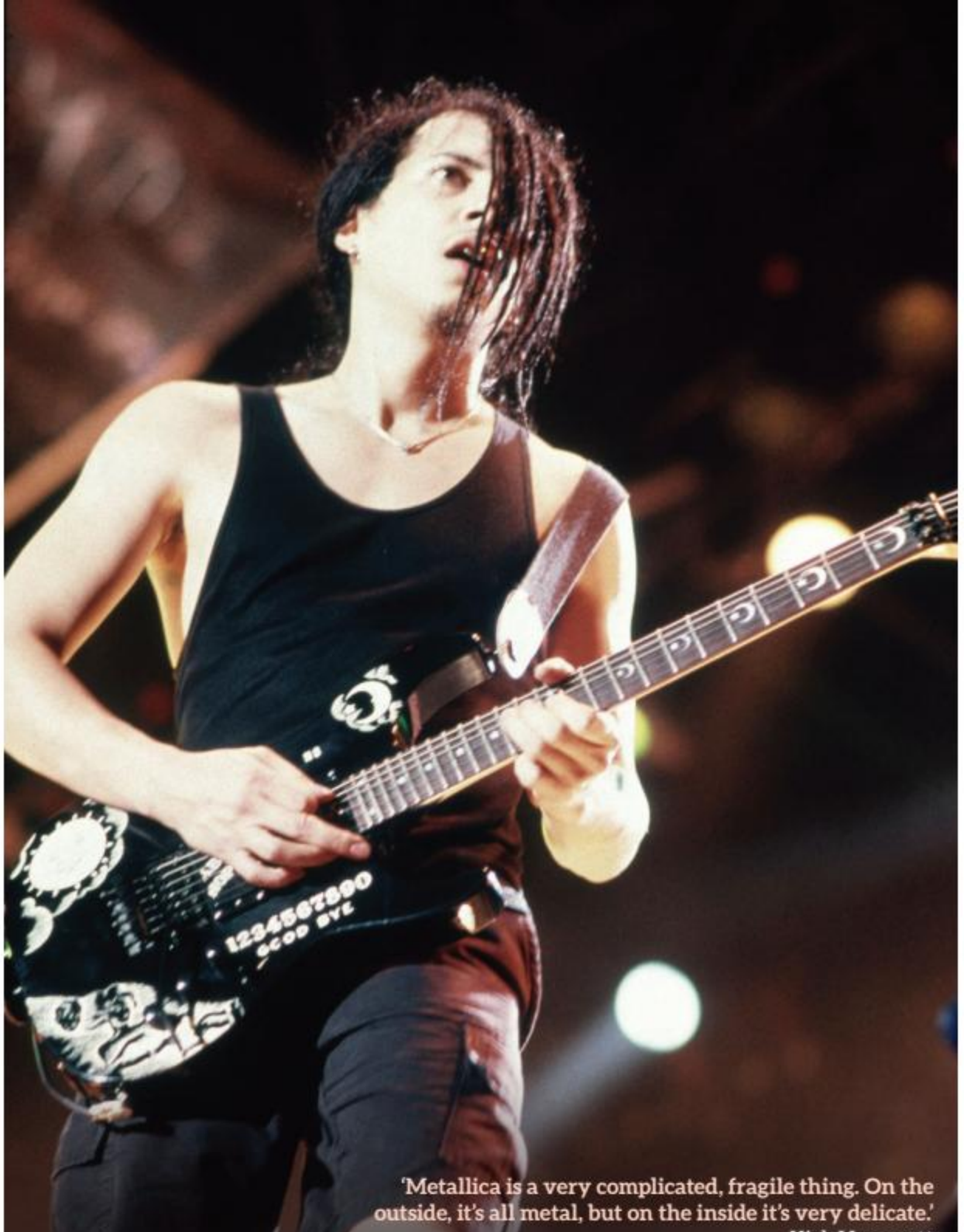

'Metallica is a very complicated, fragile thing. On the outside, it's all metal, but on the inside it's very delicate.'
– Kirk Hammett

in November, which featured Blitzkrieg and Diamond Head covers on the B-side.

The next step up occurred when Metallica quit out of their management contract with Zazula and their record deal with his label Megaforce, signing up with the giant management organisation Q-Prime (which also handled Def Leppard) and the equally huge Elektra, a subsidiary of Warners. Kirk explained: **'We looked at each [offer] individually and it seemed from what we saw that Elektra was better. Even though other offers were financially better, Elektra had a reputation for leaving complete artistic freedom with their acts. They had acts in the past, like the Doors, The Velvet Underground, the Stooges… it was a pretty liberal label. They had a reputation for trying out new things that were pretty experimental at the time. Right then there were [many] bands being signed, snatched up on major labels. All the major labels were saying, oh, metal's like the new thing, get in on the money right now. They're still doing it. Elektra only had Mötley Crüe and Dokken, and all these other labels had many more.'**

Metallica once again hit the studio with producer Flemming Rasmussen at Copenhagen's Sweet Silence facility. They recorded over three months in the autumn of 1985, and the result speaks for itself. When the phenomenal *Master of Puppets* was released in March 1986, it was a revelation – a melodic but aggressive, technical but memorable album of killer tunes. The release has since gone down in history as the finest thrash metal album ever recorded, alongside Slayer's *Reign in Blood*. A key change in the band's commercial status came after Q-Prime secured them the support slot on Ozzy Osbourne's 1986 tour, which exposed them to millions of fans and was their last tour as a supporting act.

Unfortunately mid-1986 brought a dark time for the band. First James broke his wrist while skateboarding before a gig in Evansville, Indiana. This meant that for the rest of the tour, roadie John Marshall (of band Metal Church) was forced to stand in on rhythm guitar.

Secondly, real tragedy struck when a tour bus crash in Sweden at about 6 a.m. on 27 September changed the band's outlook forever. Travelling along a road between the Scandinavian cities of Stockholm and Copenhagen, the driver lost control of the vehicle.

John Marshall, who was on board, explains, **'Apparently the bus drifted off to the right side of the road, and the driver steered left to correct. As he did this, the back end of the bus spun out to the right. While this was happening, I remember waking up, being bounced out of the bunk because the tyres were "chattering" as the bus skidded. By the time it stopped, the bus was on the right side of the road, facing the other direction. As it slid into the right shoulder of the road, it caught the gravel and tipped onto its right side. When the bus tipped, the two rows of bunks collapsed together, trapping guys underneath. I remember crawling out of the door, which was now facing upwards and jumping to the ground. I remember sitting out on the ground, waiting for help, just stunned at being awakened this way, and trying to take it all in. Bobby Schneider, the tour manager, was still inside the bus, helping to get the guys out.'**

The bus had thrown the sleeping Cliff Burton through a window and onto the road, before falling on top of him and killing him instantly. Hetfield relayed the horrifying incident in 1993: **'I saw the bus lying right on him. I saw his legs sticking out. I freaked. The bus driver, I recall, was trying to yank the blanket out from under him to use for other people. I just went, "Don't fucking do that!" I already wanted to kill the guy. I don't know if he was drunk or if he hit some ice. All I knew was, he was driving and Cliff wasn't alive anymore.'**

The dazed band were taken to the local police station, where the driver was routinely arrested (he was later freed) and the remaining personnel attempted to recover. The tour was cancelled and the band flew home after two days, attending Cliff's funeral sometime later.

Although devastated, the band were determined not to let the accident define them, and they didn't sit around for long, as Kirk later explained: **'Right after the accident happened, we individually decided that the best way to get rid of all our frustrations would be to hit the road and get all the anxiety and frustrations out on stage, where they should go. They should go toward a positive thing like that. We were very**

traumatised, and felt a lot of emotional distress over the situation… The worst thing we could do is just sit in our room and sulk over the matter and wallow in our pity. The more you think about it, the deeper you sink. We each thought individually, we have to keep on going; we have to work because it wouldn't be fair to Cliff to just stop. Also, if he was alive for some reason or another and, you know, he couldn't play bass, he wouldn't tell us to stop. That's the way he would've felt. He would've wanted us to go on.'

Back in America, Brian Slagel was helping Metallica find another bass player. Metallica unsuccessfully auditioned Les Claypool (later of Primus) and many others before Brian suggested a possible player: **'Apparently a couple of other people Lars spoke to had thought of Flotsam and Jetsam and told him yeah, that guy's really good. So we arranged for their bass player, Jason Newsted, to fly up to San Fran to audition. I called Jason and said, "I don't want to get you too excited, but what would you think about possibly auditioning for the Metallica gig?" He was freaking out, saying, "Are you kidding me? They're like my favourite band of all time!" I think he was more nervous than anything else – like, "Really? This is really happening?" And I was like, "Yeah! You should definitely do it."'**

On 28 October – just a month after Cliff's death – Jason auditioned with Metallica, having learned all their songs beforehand. His dedication and talent impressed the group and he was readily accepted into the band after a drinking session at a venue called Tommy's Joint, with the words 'Welcome to Metallica'.

There was little time to wait around, as Metallica had Californian gigs and their first Japanese tour lined up. Jason's first gig with Metallica was in support of Metal Church at The Country Club in Reseda, followed by a set at Jezabelle's in Anaheim and a flight to the East.

By 1987 the band had (superficially at least) stabilised, and recordings were underway for the release that introduced Jason to the Metallica fanbase. When the five-track (four tracks in the UK) *The $5.98 EP: Garage Days Re-Revisited* was released on 10 August, it was an immediate hit. The release showcased Jason's fat bass sound and dexterous style, and acted as a suitable precursor to the live shows that summer. In December that year Metallica released a VHS called *Cliff 'Em All* – a collection of grainy Burton footage that is essential viewing to this day.

'We do this basically for ourselves. People appreciate it, which is cool, but I think they appreciate that we're doing it for ourselves. We're doing it our way, and how people like it is not up to us. We like it.' – James Hetfield

The next step up the ladder of fame was a slot on the summer 1988 Monsters of Rock Tour (distinct from the UK Donington event) with Van Halen in support and others including Scorpions, Kingdom Come and Dokken. Metallica stole the show on most dates, partying harder than ever before and taking intermediate time out to mix the result of their latest recording sessions, a new album entitled … *And Justice for All*. Lars loved the Monsters of Rock Tour, telling *Rolling Stone*, **'It was fucking great. It was 1988, right before … *And Justice for All* came out. We were at the bottom, sandwiched between Kingdom Come and Dokken. Basically, at that time, we used to start drinking when we woke up. We'd get the gig over by three o'clock, and then we'd have eight or nine hours to drink. It was awesome. This was our first exposure to big crowds, like, 50,000 people every day. Well, we were just drunk basically all the time. Girls knew we were part of the tour and wanted to fuck us, but at the same time we could blend in with the crowd. There's a point where you end up sitting in your dressing room because there's fourteen layers of security. Back then it was like, who gives a shit? Let's have another rum and Coke and go back in the audience and see what's happening. There are pictures of us at the top of Tampa Stadium with our pants off, flashing everybody. It's four o'clock in the afternoon and we're already drunk off our asses. The not-giving-a-fuck meter was peaking.'**

Indeed. On 25 August 1988 … *And Justice for All* was released, scoring mixed reactions despite its exquisite arrangements and catchy, satisfyingly dark tunes. The main problem for most fans was its mix, executed by the Steve Thompson and Michael Barbiero mixing team according to Lars and James' instructions. Jason's bass parts were mixed out almost entirely, leaving the record dominated by James' huge, cold guitar sound.

Metallica at the 1991 MTV Video Music Awards. Left to right: Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, Jason Newsted and James Hetfield. Held at the Universal Amphitheatre, Los Angeles on 5 September 1991, Metallica performed *Enter Sandman* during the event.

'It didn't affect us at all. We basically didn't give a fuck. We were going to stick to our guns.'
– Kirk Hammett on accusations of Metallica selling out.

Newsted was disappointed by the results but kept quiet about it for many years, only opening up about the issues a decade later. As he recalled, the recording sessions themselves started badly, perhaps because the original producer, Mike Clink, had been fired to be replaced by Rasmussen: **'They're juggling producers. There's no order. And no authority to say, we need this producer doing this, at this time, to record that, to make that happen. Even though we had the money. Even though we had the support of the label. Even though we had a nice studio. And all that kinda thing. None of that was in order… I stepped in with an assistant engineer and I had my same gear that I would just play on the stage. There was no time taken about "You place this microphone here, and this one will sound better than that. Should we mix it with the DI? Should we use this bass instead of that bass? Should we get that tonality? Should you use a pick? Should you use your fingers?" Any of the things that I know now, that make a really good bass sound. You plug in, you play the song. I could play 'em standing on my head with my eyes closed, any of those songs. I rehearsed those songs up the ass. Right?**

'So I go in and I knock 'em out. Basically, doubling James' guitar parts, because that's the kind of bass player I was then. Lars and James weren't around to say, "You should try that there instead of that there." Or a real producer or a manager, or anybody to say "That's OK." I'd go in and record three or four songs in a day or an afternoon. I'd just sit there and knock it out. And there'd be mistakes and whatever. I'd just play it and that would be that. And "OK, you did good – bye!" Usually nowadays I'd take one day per song. That's what I do on albums. So I allow myself to get in early, to get the sound you want, you go and you record all day to get that fit, that's what I allow myself. Now some guys take a lot longer, some guys take less time. But back then; I didn't even know anything about that shit. Just played it and that was that, right?'

On top of this, Metallica were performing on the Van Halen tour while mixing was going on: **'So then we get the offer to go on Monsters of Rock in the summer, OK? And by the time they've bopped Mike Clink out of the producer's seat, and there's a void, and**

early with kind of an attitude about the bass – it's not Cliff, and yadda yadda – and they go in and tell the [mixers], get the bass just where you can hear it, and then take it down a half a decibel. Then turn all the frequency up on the guitars, and all that stuff. And then try to make the bass drum to fill in all the space so it can be all percussive, and all that kind of thing. And that is why it is… I've learned a lot from that. I was so in the dirt, I was so disappointed when I heard the final mix, I basically blocked it out, like people do with shit. We were firing on all cylinders, and shit was happening. I was just rolling with it and going forward. What was I gonna do, say we gotta go remix it, when we were down to the last minutes with people saying, "We gotta say when, we gotta say when?" And all that bullshit. Now, if you were to ask them, now that they have time and they're fathers, you know, life, maturity… they would go, fuck, "Whoops!" They would say it right to your face.'

In late 1988 Metallica began the extensive Damaged Justice Tour in Budapest, Hungary, before releasing a professionally filmed video for the single, *One*. Early in 1989 it seemed that the industry had finally woken up to Metallica, nominating them for a Grammy in the heavy metal category. Amazingly, folk-rockers Jethro Tull won, leading Metallica to add stickers to the sleeve of later pressings of … *And Justice for All* that read 'Grammy Award LOSERS'. The following year the band did in fact win a Grammy for Best Metal Performance, for *One*, and thanked Tull in their speech for not releasing any material that year.

1989 and 1990 passed in a blur for Metallica, who kept their profile relatively low, only releasing a cover of Queen's *Stone Cold Crazy* for an Elektra anniversary album, which netted them another Grammy in early 1991. Much of 1990 was spent in rehearsals and recording for the next album. Sessions took place at the One On One studio in Los Angeles with a new producer, Bob Rock, over several months from October. Rock had been chosen for his track record with Mötley Crüe and The Cult, among others, and was thought likely to bring about radical changes to the band's sound… yet no one had foreseen quite how radical. When the video for a new song, *Enter Sandman*, was premiered on 30 July 1991, fans were astounded at how mainstream and polished the new sound was. The song was basically a fist-pounding heavy metal anthem, full to the brim with a big, big bass sound. It was worlds away from the thin frequencies and complex arrangements of the last album, three years earlier. A huge tour began on 1 August, and the album, the self-titled *Metallica*, was released on the 12 August. Some shops opened at one minute past midnight on that day, so great was the the hype that Elektra had created around the album. *Metallica* became universally known as 'The Black Album' owing to its pure black sleeve, a homage to Spinal Tap's *Smell the Glove*.

The tour, which rolled on with scarcely a break for the best part of three years, was full of highlights. One was a show in Moscow at the invitation of the Russian Prime Minister. This attracted 500,000 people and seemed somehow to embody a new future for the country, which had recently seen the fall of the Soviet Union. Another was the Concert for Life, a 20 April 1992 show at the Wembley Stadium in London dedicated to the late Freddie Mercury.

The end of the tour marked the closing of an era for Metallica. They were becoming ever more famous, and had risen from their humble beginnings to global superstardom. They were integral in bringing thrash metal into the public eye, and have inspired countless bands that came since. Seemingly unstoppable, Metallica are still going strong today, and thankfully their lifestyle of private jets is a far cry from eating cold hot dogs in the basement of The Music Building. If you fancy catching a glimpse of this iconic group, Metallica are on tour globally throughout 2020, and undoubtedly will be for many years to come.

then Flemming comes in, my stuff's already on tape and put in the back and forgotten. We get to the mixing stage and no-one is chosen for the mix. Still no order in that either. We go on this tour with Van Halen and Scorpions – the guys who invented partying, piles of powder here and there and all that shit… that was the first taste for us of dipping your foot in the actual scene of rock and roll, you know. So we're doing a few shows a week with those guys on that special festival – and on the days that we aren't, James and Lars are flying to Bearsville, New York, to mix it with these two other cats (Thompson and Barbiero), right, that I never met in my life, and I had no idea at all.

'So they're partying, travelling back and forth, getting no sleep, going there

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T. REX

T. REXTASY 1970-1973

Putting the Glam in Glam Rock

T. Rex were officially inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on 15 January 2020. This accolade came over fifty years after their first release, and many years after their contemporaries received such recognition. In celebration of this well-deserved achievement we look at the halcyon years of the early seventies, when T. Rex were one of the brightest stars in the British music scene.

The dawn of the seventies found T. Rex on the edge of a major breakthrough. They had changed their name from Tyrannosaurus Rex, putting their days of psychedelic folk behind them; they were ready for a change. The group had been in the studio working on a new, more electric, pop-oriented sound. This new sound, and their increasingly glamorous aesthetic, was finally ready for the masses.

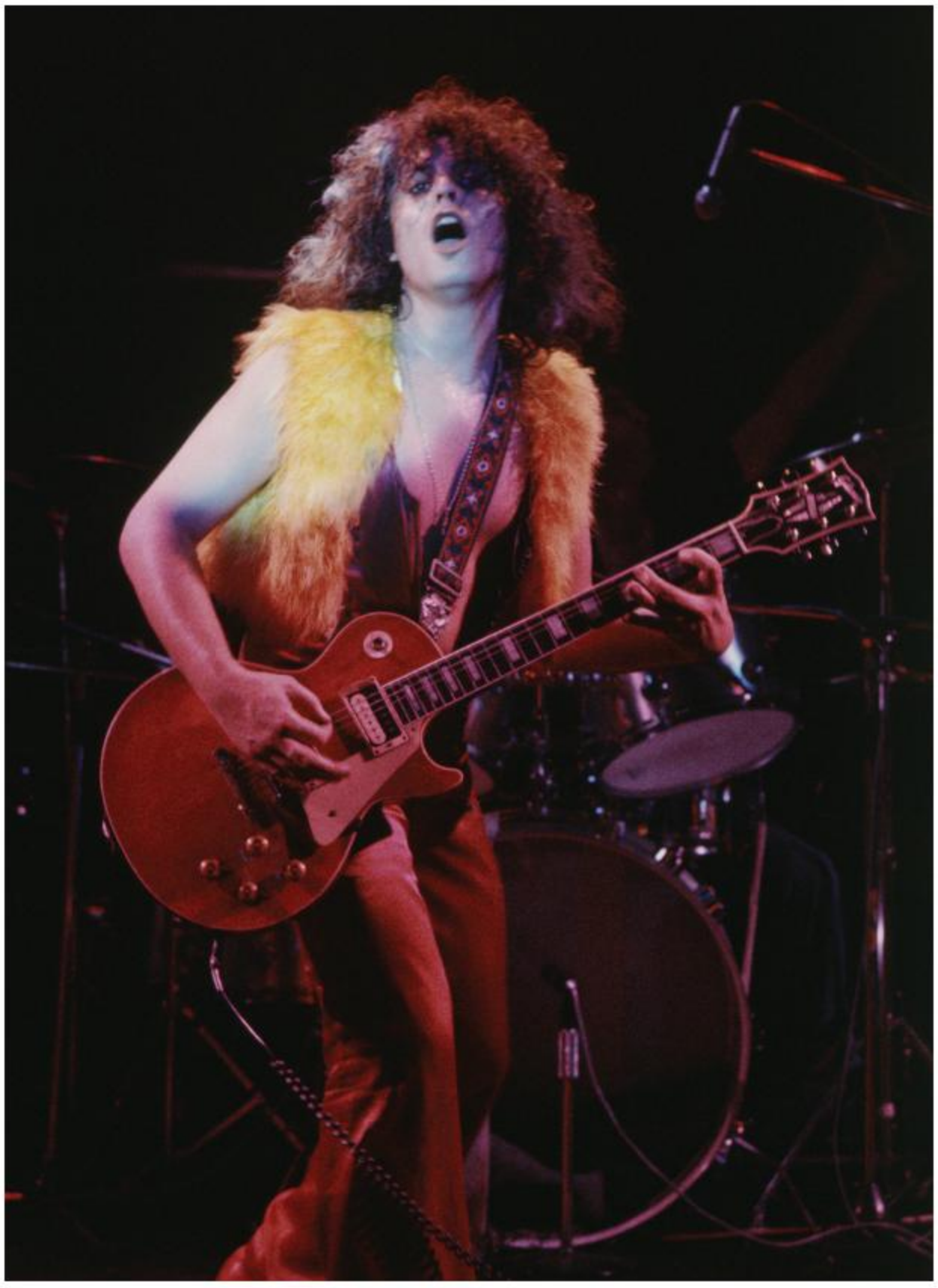
The first opportunity for Marc Bolan to unveil his electric guitar playing talents on a major platform was an unexpected one. He appeared, not on a T. Rex release, but on the latest single by another of producer Tony Visconti's clients, David Bowie. The pair had been friends for some time, and had even toured together when Bowie's mime act opened for one of Tyrannosaurus Rex's UK tours.

Like Bolan, Bowie had been struggling through the confines of cult obscurity for much of the sixties. However, unlike Bolan, for whom chart success was still a minor ripple (three out of Tyrannosaurus Rex's five singles made the lower reaches of the listings), he had just scored a major hit with *Space Oddity*. January 1970 saw Bowie recording its follow-up, *The Prettiest Star* – a moving love song for his bride-to-be Angela. Bolan was offered to supply the haunting lead guitar line that soars through the song, and eagerly accepted.

> 'If God were to appear in my room, obviously I would be in awe, but I don't think I would be humble. I might cry, but I think he would dig me like crazy.'
>
> **MARC BOLAN**

Tony Visconti remembers the occasion vividly: **'That was the only time they could have worked together, the only time their egos would have allowed it. But you could tell the rivalry between them was there. Marc was okay about it. He loved the fact he'd been asked to play electric guitar on that record, because he'd only just got out of his acoustic days on his own releases. But June [Child] sat through the playback, announced that the best thing about the record was Marc's playing, and walked out of the room.'** Three weeks later she and Marc were married.

As the sessions progressed for his next album, *T. Rex*, Bolan's ambition only gained momentum. Of course, it still remained essential to Bolan's game plan that he establish himself with a hit single, but according to manager Simon Napier Bell, **'It wasn't until Kit Lambert [co-founder of Bolan's new label, Fly] and Tony Visconti had spent hours working on him, trying to convince him that it was now or never as far as his electric ambitions went, that Marc finally took the plunge'. He recorded *Ride A White Swan* knowing that it would either make him or break him. He was so scared of it bombing out that he was going around telling everybody that he**



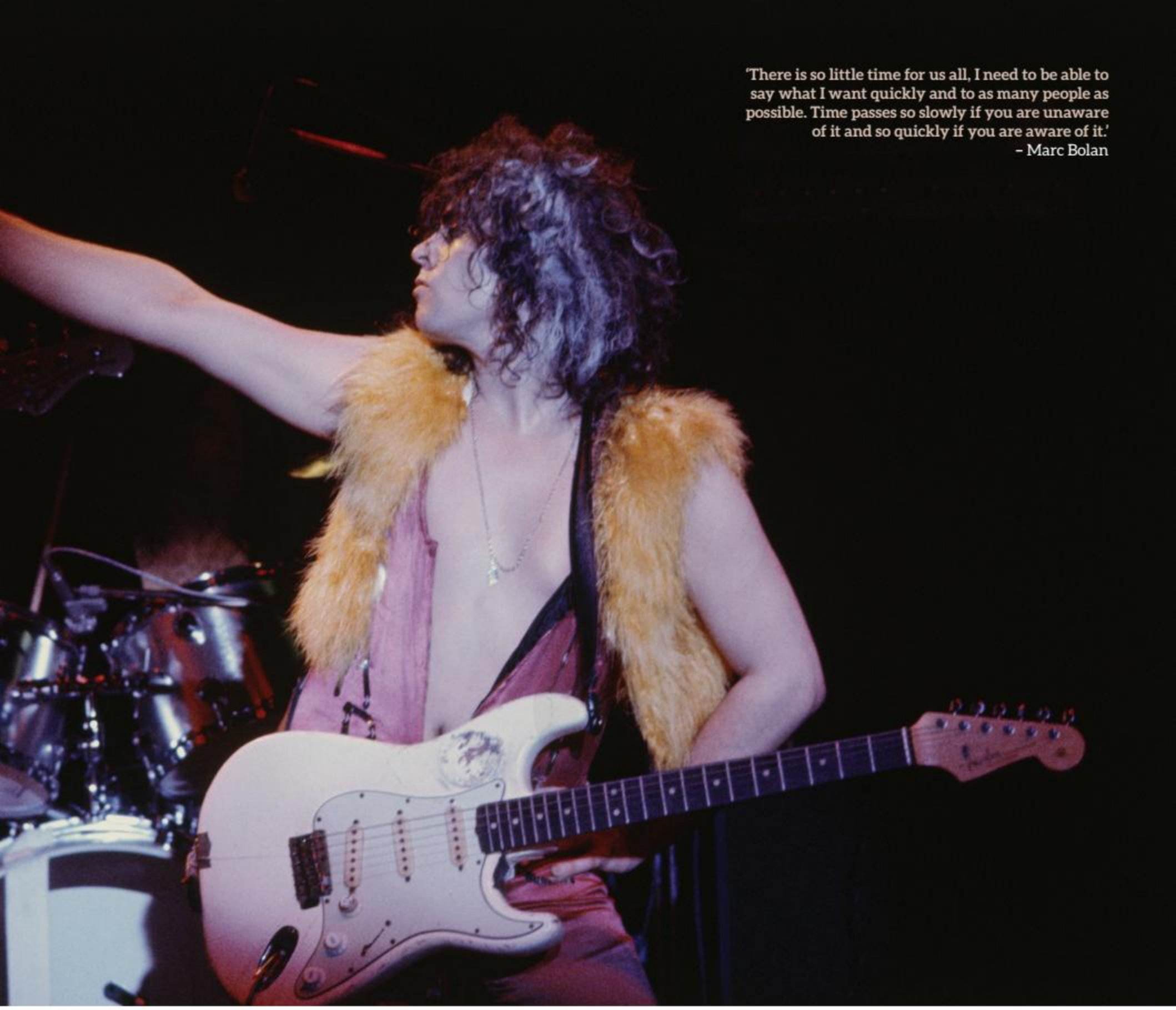
disowned the record. What he really meant was that he disowned it if it was a flop. When it was a hit though, well it simply wasn't worth the bother of trying to explain all that crap to people who said he'd sold out. Because now he was God, and whoever heard of God selling out?'

A UK tour, with specially reduced ticket prices, attracted a vast army of adolescent girls, lured by Bolan and Finn's captivating *Top of the Pops* television appearances. His older, student hippy audience had been all but obliterated by the move towards pop. Fortunately now the rumbles of discontent from Bolan's old progressive stomping grounds were drowned out beneath a barrage of screams, which didn't let up for another two years.

Andy Ellison from UK band John's Children, of which Marc Bolan was a former member, has since admitted, **'I wasn't really surprised when he made it because he had always been a very shrewd and well-organised young man. The only thing that did surprise me was that he took so long to go electric again. I was in France when all that T. Rex stuff got going, and I must admit I was feeling pretty envious. In fact, I was feeling a lot envious, because although he really deserved that success, I often wondered what would have happened if… Also I couldn't help thinking that basically all Marc had done was update what John's Children had been doing.'**

It seems Bolan agreed with him. In a 1971 interview with *ZigZag* magazine, he confessed, **'… all I've done is recreate John's Children, or at least what I wanted John's Children to be like when I was with them. I'm writing exactly the same stuff as I was five years ago, it's no different really except hopefully it's a bit better, and has a bit more insight. And I can play it now, I couldn't then. I could only play *Desdemona* before.'**

Bolan now had a firm grasp on the sonic stew that he wanted to create, with a key ingredient being two American singers he'd met during Tyrannosaurus Rex's US tour the previous year. This was the Flo & Eddie duo of Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, formerly frontmen with the Turtles, and now an indispensable addition to Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention. The pair were in London with Zappa at the time. The only problem was, Bolan hadn't actually told them of his plans. Instead, he just turned up at their hotel on the day of the session, to discover only Kaylan was home: **'Mark had gone out, he was off kicking around Kings Road or something, so I said "Shit, I'll do it, and the worst that can happen is you'll put me on twice."**



'There is so little time for us all, I need to be able to say what I want quickly and to as many people as possible. Time passes so slowly if you are unaware of it and so quickly if you are aware of it.'
– Marc Bolan

So I went into the studio with Marc and Tony Visconti, did *Ride a White Swan*, and we really didn't need more voices than that, it was just that simple little high "ooh" and "ah" stuff and we double-tracked it.'

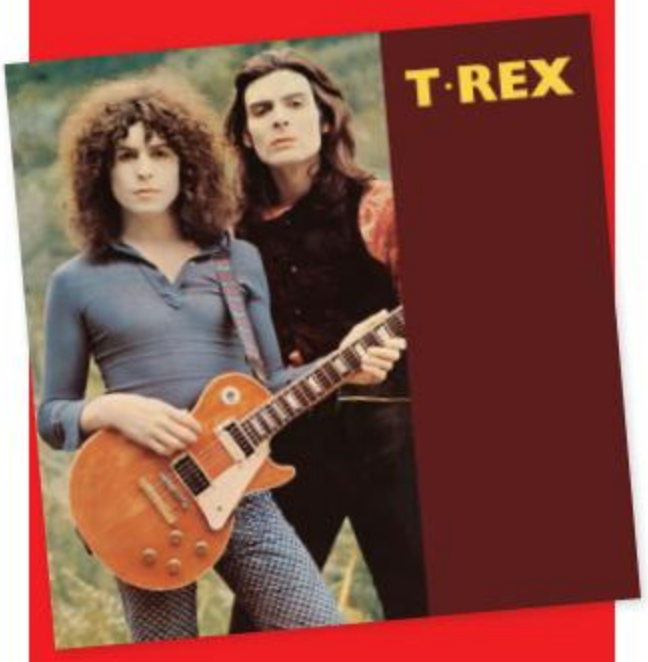
Ride a White Swan soared to No. 2 in the UK charts in December 1970. Their next single, *Hot Love*, was bassist Steve Currie and drummer Bill Legend's recorded debut with T. Rex and it showcased line-up perfectly. The release shot to No. 1 in the UK in March 1971, and remained there for six weeks. This success was no doubt aided by the fact that the vocals of both Kaylan and Volman appeared on the single. It was an iconic release and one that set in stone the T. Rex sound – much imitated but never recreated.

Kaylan has since explained, **'There's a certain intrinsic whining quality to that kind of backing vocal, that I believe came largely from our time with [Zappa]. We were singing those notes all our lives, but there was a certain nasal-ness, a whininess to it, that came from singing those parts with a little tongue-in-cheek-ness. *Hot Love* in particular, has a swaggering, fake sass; it's us pretending to be chicks, with every bit of the gris-gris-gumbo-ya-ya that we could muster. It's almost mocking and it should be, because it's guys. It sounds like two 300 lb guys in tutus, daring you to lift their skirts.'**

Five months later, *Get It On* (or *Bang a Gong* as conservative America insisted on retitling it) ruled the roost for another month. The monster hit boosted Bolan to superstardom in the UK, and has remained a favourite with fans and Bolan himself: **'I honestly believe *Get It On* was one of the best things I've ever done and the only kind of criticism I'm going to accept about it is that if someone can say, "Well, that's out of tune or the guitar work is crap." OK, but I know it isn't.'**

The single inspired impressive advance orders for the *Electric Warrior* album – in excess of 35,000 copies. *Electric Warrior* spent the best part of a year on the chart, cementing T. Rex's reputation permanently. The album even spent Christmas 1971 heroically challenging veteran actor Clive Dunn for the coveted No. 1 slot. It failed, but still finished one of the best selling records of the year: Bolan had made it.

At a time when rock was rock and fun was just for the kiddies, Bolan cut through all the contradictions, flouncing onstage in sequins and satin, blasting out a joyous celebration of youth and potency. With just one flick of his corkscrew curls, he ushered in the era of glam rock, and brought British pop to its most



T. REX

By 1970, Tyrannosaurus Rex had been the darlings of the hippie underground for almost three years. Marc Bolan and percussionist Steve 'Peregrine' Took were softly-spoken purveyors of fantasy and idealism whose unique sound had attracted a loyal cult following.

Things looked set to continue in the same vein after Mickey Finn replaced Took in 1970. Yet they now found themselves increasingly at odds with a music scene in which more down-to-earth singer-songwriters and blues-rockers were beginning to hold sway.

Having started life as the fifth Tyrannosaurus Rex LP, *T. Rex* was issued on 18 December 1970. In retrospect it is a transitional album, a mixture of what had gone before and what was to follow. Bolan's voice was more prominent than usual, the percussion was toned down and augmented with conventional drums, with bass parts included to round out the overall sound. It's clear that much of the material presented here was written acoustically, then given a heavier treatment in the studio, but there was a definite rock influence on several of the numbers.

To some extent, the album was eclipsed by the success of the single *Ride a White Swan*. At the time, Bolan was at pains to point out that much of the material had been recorded some months earlier, and that people shouldn't expect it to sound like the single. Perhaps it was Marc's apparent reluctance to throw himself wholeheartedly behind the album that accounted for its failure to make the Top 10.

Despite his protests, *T. Rex* did reveal a definite change in dynamic. The band's name had been shortened, and in place of the artistic pretentions of their earlier covers, there was a simple photo of Marc and Mickey that portrayed them almost as pin-ups. It was the last time anyone other than Bolan appeared on the front cover of a T. Rex album.

'I've always been a wriggler. I just dig dancing.'
– Marc Bolan

invigorating high. Single-handedly he dragged rock 'n' roll out of the grave, at the same time screwing down the coffin lid on pretension and reserve.

In electrifying fashion, he relaunched the single as a work of art, shrugging aside the belief that it was impossible to have a revolution at 45 rpm, and letting rip in a surge of sequins and sex. It took him one hit to make it, one hit to consolidate it, and after that, he could do what he wanted.

The genre that Bolan so effortlessly created was essentially one of pure narcissism. Aided by British television's recent conversion to colour (*Top of the Pops* finally dropped the monochrome in 1970) it revolved around looking good, sounding good and being good. Bolan could do all three. His image was a series of carefully calculated visual hooks, his mane of curling hair, the glittering eye paint, the elfin smile, the metallic green and electric blue in which he dressed, everything was designed to catch the eye. Bolan might have been short, but he would stand out in any crowd and he thrived on the attention: **'I mean, I am my own fantasy. I am the "cosmic dancer" who dances his way out of the womb and into the tomb on *Electric Warrior*. I'm not frightened to get up there and groove about in front of six million people on TV because it doesn't look cool. That's the way I would do it at home.'**

Verbally Bolan was brilliant. He wove legends like he wove songs, he seldom lied but he always economised on the truth, playing up one angle, playing down another (and then telling it the other way around the next time he spoke). The public came to believe in everything he said; after a while, it seemed he did as well. Bolan's private playground had always been one of pure imagination – the very notion that he could become the biggest rock star ever had seemed a fanciful dream during the hazy days of Tyrannosaurus Rex. Now, he was the biggest rock star in the country, a life he

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'I am the "Cosmic Dancer" who dances his way out of the womb and into the tomb on "Electric Warrior". I'm not frightened to get up there and groove about in front of six million people on TV because it doesn't look cool.'
– Marc Bolan

'I'm serious about the music, but I'm not serious about the fantasy. It's no big deal being on TV!'
– Marc Bolan

felt he was born to live: **'It's my life and I'm enjoying myself more now than ever before. I'm a rock and roll poet man who is just bopping around on the side. I'm not about to do the *Engelbert Humperdinck Show* – they can rip me off when I get into that bag but what I do now is what I believe in and if they don't like it they can go ride a bike.'**

1972 began precisely where 1971 left off. In January, *Telegram Sam* (Bolan's punning tribute to the brilliant Tony Secunda) sold 97,000 copies before it was even released, debuting Bolan's own Hot Wax label with another fortnight at No. 1. In March, T. Rex sold out the massive Empire Pool, Wembley, staging a barnstorming concert that became the centrepiece of the timelessly ebullient *Born to Boogie* movie.

An unsanctioned single, *Debora*, was released shortly after by the label Fly. This was simply a reissue of Tyrannosaurus Rex's first ever 45, but the band were so popular at this point that even old material made No. 7. The new single *Metal Guru* then hogged the top spot for a month. *Bolan Boogie*, a collection of 1970–71 era album tracks and B-sides, and a two-for-one repackaging of Bolan's first two albums, followed *Electric Warrior* to No. 1. This meant T. Rex had now enjoyed three No. 1 albums on the trot, a truly remarkable feat.

Many would say that none of these singles were musical masterpieces, of course – but they were never meant to be. *Get It On*, *Telegram Sam* and *Metal Guru* were built around the simplest of sequences, catchy and immediate. If any one criticism could be levelled at Bolan it was that while his ideas grew ever more ambitious, complex and ingenious, his musical capabilities remained constant. Tony Visconti, who produced Bolan throughout his most successful years (at the expense of his relationship with Bowie) insists that Bolan's musical knowledge was negligible: **'He never seemed to get past seven or eight chords on the guitar, which makes it amazing that he wrote so many good songs. When the critics started saying all his songs sounded the same, that was the reason, because he never graduated beyond those few chords.'**

ELECTRIC WARRIOR

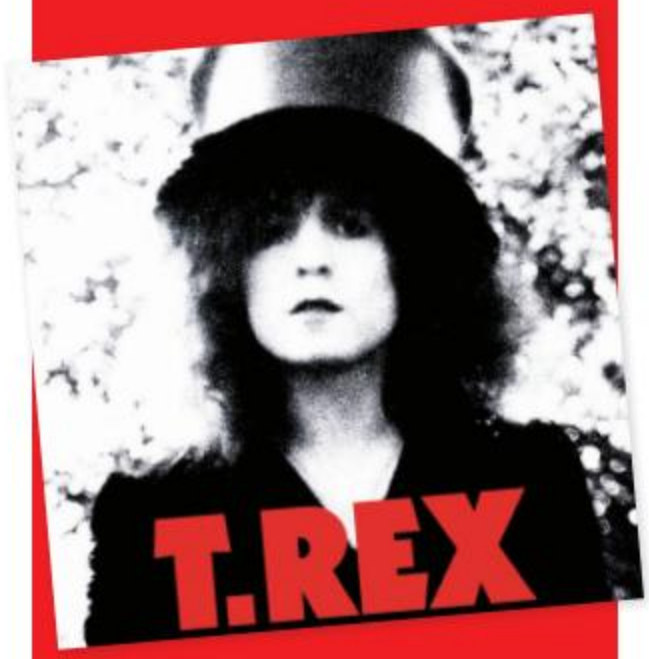
Bolan's concentration on a return to 12-bar basics threw up a clutch of new songs with the potential to succeed. *Hot Love* proved a winner, topping the UK singles chart for six weeks in March and April 1971.

A second chart-topping single followed in July, when *Get It On* began a four-week stay at No. 1. And by the time *Electric Warrior* was released on 24 September 1971, T. Rex's transformation was complete. Describing the new style as 'Cosmic Rock', Bolan was fast becoming a phenomenon. Unfortunately his success led some to accuse him of selling out, and of betraying the counter-culture he had once seemed to champion though his words and music. In truth, Bolan had always sought the attention he was now enjoying, and his ambition was being rewarded after years of frustration.

Just as the new T. Rex style flew in the face of prevailing musical trends, *Electric Warrior* itself was at odds with contemporary efforts. Whereas the emergence of progressive groups was leading to ever more sophisticated recording techniques and a more polished sound, *Electric Warrior* had a somewhat primitive feel. Although the blues and hippie culture were still clear influences, they were now supplemented by fuzzy guitars, feminine vocals and overt sexuality.

Brash, mystical and sleazy by turns, *Electric Warrior* is close to being the definitive glam rock opus. Even if it was pieced together in an almost ad hoc manner during the band's Spring 1971 US tour. Bolan applied the final touches to the new material during April, before taking the band on a short tour of the UK to capitalise on the success of *Hot Love*.

Electric Warrior was released in September, and, unlike its predecessor, enjoyed the endorsement of its chief creator. 'As far as I'm concerned,' he told one music writer, 'this is the first album I've ever made. The others were just ideas...'



THE SLIDER

Nearly half a century later, it's hard to remember exactly how big an impact T. Rex had on the UK during the early 1970s. Their concerts saw hordes of teenage girls falling over each other to get closer to their idol in scenes reminiscent of Beatlemania.

By 1972, the glam rock bandwagon had begun to roll, and the likes of David Bowie and Slade were threatening to grab a piece of the action. Realising he had to keep moving to keep ahead, Bolan decided to re-evaluate the T. Rex sound once more, and worked with producer Visconti aiming for a fuller, more luxurious texture. Bolan took inspiration from what he'd achieved on *T. Rex* and *Electric Warrior*. Then, looking back to the biggest pop success stories of the 1960s, Motown and Stax, Marc began to build his own 'wall of sound'.

Meanwhile, as T. Rex continued to gain momentum, amid the madness that was now being called 'T. Rextasy'. Marc now had the unenviable task of producing a follow-up to what had already been acknowledged as a glam classic. The demands of the media were putting enormous pressure on him, but for a while, at least, Bolan seemed to be in his element, and regularly claimed to be writing songs at a prodigious rate.

The Slider shot to No. 4 in the UK album charts soon after its release on 21 July 1972. Replete with memorable lyrical as well as musical hooks, this album compares well to the defining *Electric Warrior*. This is no mean feat given the freshness and vitality of its predecessor. All the key ingredients of the T. Rex canon are present and correct – the mystical ballads and nonsense poetry, the overt sexuality and the three-minute boogie – but the material has a maturity brought to it by superior production.

The Slider proved that Bolan was still ahead of the game, and remains the classic soundtrack album to the high summer of glam rock.

At the same time, Bolan was an astonishing guitarist, not technically of course, but even locked within the boundaries that a trained musician might describe as his limitations, Bolan was capable of some breathtaking feats. He might never be mentioned with the same reverence as Beck, Clapton, Ronson and Hendrix; and would never feature in Top 100 Guitar Players polls. But, he had a distinctive sound and flair, wielding the guitar with such style that the audience could not help but become mesmerised. As Bolan himself put it, **'There are magic mists within certain chords. You play a C major chord and I hear twenty-five melodies and symphonies up here. I've just got to pull one out. There's no strain, it just gushes out.'**

The other factor that truly set Bolan aside was his lyrical prowess. Effortlessly, he reeled off nonsensical nomenclatures by the bucketful, imbibing them with an evocative magic that both complimented and encompassed the accompanying words and music. 'Salamanda palaganda', 'Telegram Sam, you're my main man', and even Dylan Thomas would have been hard-pressed to top 'Cat Black, the wizard's hat.'

Nobody that followed could do anything more than stand on the outside, gazing enviously in on the universe Bolan had constructed around himself. In this universe the performer, the performance and all the other, peripheral things were as one. Nothing else mattered and there was not one possible physical, emotional or critical response that could even dent the bubble at that time. For two years, Marc Bolan was invincible.

And then the chart toppers stopped. The double album that paired *Unicorn* and *A Beard of Stars* barely scratched the Top 50, Bolan's lowest album chart placing ever. The last two singles of the year, *Children of the Revolution* and *Solid Gold Easy Action*, both stopped short of the top. Overnight, it seemed, Bolan's bubble had burst – and the fall would be hard. New stars had brought along new tricks, and Bolan had only himself to blame.

Part of the problem was musical. T. Rex's success was built on the T. Rex sound, the result of everybody in the studio pulling together towards the same ends. The work ethic hadn't changed, but the personnel had. Mark Volman and Howard Kayman, backing vocalists on every recording since *Ride a White Swan*, bowed out following the sessions for *The Slider*. Instead, Bolan – now separated from his wife June – invited his new

girlfriend, Gloria Jones, to step in to take their place. Unfortunately her attempts to recreate the same backing sound from a more soulful angle didn't begin to echo the classic sound, and the records faltered accordingly. *20th Century Boy* climbed no higher than No. 3 in the charts, *The Groover*, perished at No. 4 and from thereon, Bolan's career was in free fall.

'It sounds terrible,' Volman later admitted, **'but every major hit single he had revolves around us. We said that to Marc, every day of the week. There never was a time when we didn't remind him that we had hit records before him and, if he hadn't brought us in, he'd never have had a hit of his own. We always brought that down on him, and it just made him laugh.'** But he also agreed with them and, in 1975, Bolan invited the pair back into the studio, to join him on the nonsensically joyful *New York City*. The magic formula was back and T. Rex promptly stormed back into the Top 20 for the first time in over a year.

T. Rex in performance in 1974.
'All rock musicians are deaf... or insensitive to mellow sounds.'
– Marc Bolan

Unfortunately the success did not last. The majority of Bolan's early 1973 releases were little more than hollow attempts to recapture the glory of the previous two years. The *Tanx* album was seen as a belated attempt to signpost his next direction, whilst he simultaneously struggled to regain lost ground. By the time 1974 rolled around, T. Rex was pretty much spent as a commercial force.

It was a harsh fact – Bolan alone had created the glam rock market, he had seen it flourish and explode. Yet now it had overtaken him. David Bowie, Alvin Stardust, The Sweet and Mud, were all now out-charting T. Rex.

Despite T. Rex's poor commercial performance, Bolan remained a firm favourite with the public. Early in 1996, a British TV show highlighted what its makers called the Glam Top 10 by showcasing the ten most successful artists of the era. Bolan romped home in second place – only Slade, the pantomime Stones to his sepulchral Beatles, outsold him, but not even they out-performed him. Bowie, incidentally, didn't even rank.

Even without their shared history, it was no coincidence that David Bowie's rise to glory should coincide almost exactly with Bolan's fall from grace. Bolan's success had relied on his almost unaccompanied breakthrough. When he first hit the scene and he was unique. The people who followed could not help but take his lead, and with it a facet of his own personality. Slade took the terrace chant simplicity, The Sweet took the prepubescent awareness and David Bowie took the sex.

Bolan's own sexuality had never been dwelt upon. He could drag up as much as he wanted, rumours of his impending sex change and marriage to bongo player Mickey Finn could circulate freely, and not once did Bolan step forward to end the speculation. That responsibility was left to Bowie, and with it, the rewards.

Bolan was furious that Bowie had beaten him to the bisexual punch, but it was already too late. For someone with as much pride in his powers of invention, there was no way he was going to say – or do – something that had already been done. Tony Visconti explained, **'Marc simply couldn't stand attention going in anyone else's direction. David, on the other hand, always liked Marc. He liked to be with him. He would come home after a social session feeling quite hurt after Bolan had taken too many digs at him.'** In the end, the strain, and the rivalry, simply became too much, and through much of the early to mid 1970s, the two superstars were scarcely even on speaking terms – a sad turnabout from the days when they had been virtually inseparable.

Visconti continued, **'Marc was in rivalry with everybody. He was a total megalomaniac, God bless him, which is what a lot of stars are made of. You have to have a huge ego to be a huge success, Marc's was simply huger than most. He used to do things like buy**

'The prospect of being immortal doesn't excite me, but the prospect of being a materialistic idol for four years does appeal.'
– Marc Bolan

ten albums a day, James Burton guitar player records, then come round to my flat, play them, and ask me what I thought. So I'd say, "Pretty good, that's a good solo" and he's say "Yeah, but I'm better." Once I was listening to a John Williams album – I love classical music and I was off in a reverie somewhere, going "Oh, what marvellous technique", and Marc said, "I could play like that in two weeks." He was in rivalry with everyone. He couldn't stand competition. He'd meet it head on, even if he had to make the most outrageous claims. He'd have the bravado to do it.' 1974 truly signalled the end of an era for Bolan. He failed to chart even one No. 1 single, a result he flippantly dismissed with the quip, **'1974 was a bad year for Libras.'** Yet even for Bolan and his indomitable spirit the writing was clear on the wall. **'Glam rock is dead,'** he stated, **'I was allowing the madness to move away. I'll accept that I'm blatantly commercial because I enjoy it, but I would like to do something beyond the simple Bolan rock 'n' roll, and if only a quarter of the kids come with it, it wouldn't matter. I enjoyed the madness and being born to boogie, but I can see more clearly now.'**

Unfortunately the desired phoenix-like rise back to the upper echelons of pop stardom never came for Bolan. Instead he became more heavily dependent on cocaine and alcohol, and struggled through a mishmash of projects for the next three years. Though there were flashes of Bolan's original genius, he never truly seemed to find himself again. The end came all too soon when Marc Bolan died unexpectedly in a car crash on 16 September 1977. He was only twenty-nine, but seemed to have been predicting his tragic demise for some time: **'The thing about success, certainly in the rock 'n' roll business, is that it gives you an incredible amount, but what it takes away is irreplaceable and sometimes I get a funny feeling that I shan't be here very long. And I'm not talking in terms of things like success. It frightens me sometimes.'**

Eerily Bolan had never learned to drive, as he feared being involved in a fatal accident such as this. The artist even seemed to predict the type of car he would die in whilst in conversation with Simon Napier-Bell: **'Chet Baker was a hero of his, and James Dean. And I said, "Well, be careful having James Dean as a hero, because you might end up dying in a Porsche." And he said, "Oh, I'm just tiny, I'd like to die in a Mini."'**

So he did, and on 20 September 1977 friends and family buried a unique talent. The greatest pioneer of glam rock, Bolan's impact on pop music, fashion and the music industry is impossible to underestimate. His unique style and flair, as well as his passion and drive are impossible to forget. To this day bands still cite Bolan as an inspiration and covers of his music have been released by acts from every musical persuasion. These range from Siouxsie and the Banshees and Depeche Mode, to Guns N' Roses and Oasis. Bolan's induction to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2020 proves that his legacy is as powerful as it ever was – in the 21st Century the 20th Century boy may be gone, but never forgotten.

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FOCUS

THE HALCYON YEARS

Enigmatic, evolutionary, revolutionary, progressive and unique – there was nothing quite like Focus. Here we take a look back at the classic period of 1970–1974 and delve deeper into their definitive releases of that time.

The founding member of Focus, Thijs van Leer headed the band through several line-up changes before disbanding Focus in 1978.

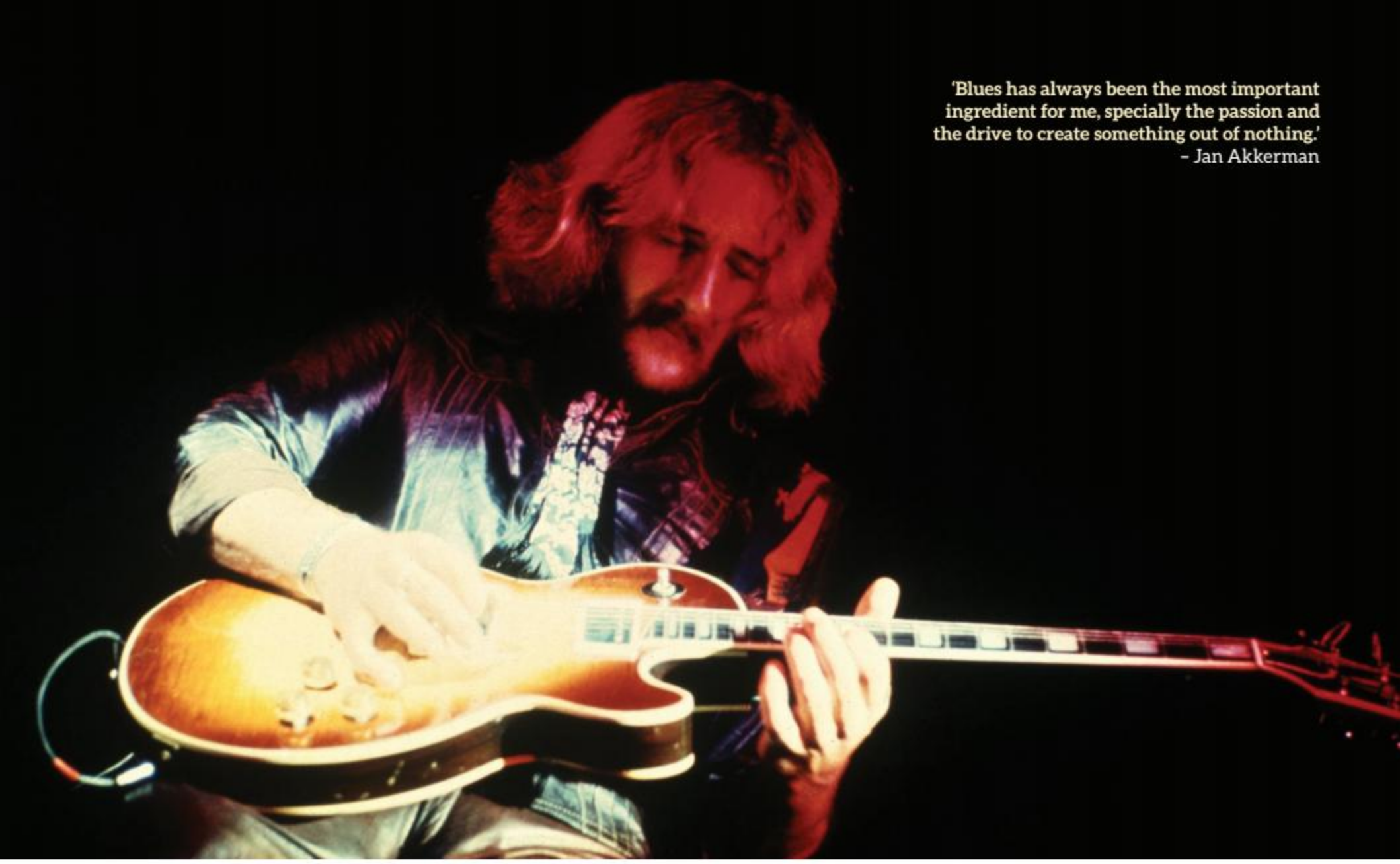
Focus were a band in possession of a wealth of ideas and musical talent, this was combined with a bravery to release work that was nothing short of pioneering. It was a well of creation that produced some excellent moments in rock whilst paying tribute to the classics and a whole host of other influences. Whilst producing rock music that demanded your full attention it also occasionally poked fun at itself and the listener. This music contained many bizarre moments, which in many ways, made it more accessible and resulted in it capturing imaginations all over the world. Focus helped put the Netherlands on the musical map and ensured that their music would be a talking point for many years, as the band explored many different paths and styles along their journey.

Thijs van Leer was born on 31 March 1948 in the wonderful Dutch city of Amsterdam. Amsterdam was of course destined to become the liberal epicentre of reinvented Europe and attracted many famous rock stars, like Jim Morrison with the Doors and Janis Joplin, who were keen to play the open squares of the city and sample its bohemian lifestyle. Encouraged by his father, Thijs took his first piano lesson at the incredibly young age of three. Some ten years later he had also begun to master the flute and both of these instruments, which he excelled in, later formed the basis of the intricacies that were the Focus experience. At the end of the sixties, Thijs completed his formal training and formed a band alongside bass guitarist Martin Dresden and drummer Hans Cleuver. The young band started out on a journey of musical exploration. It was a journey that took in traditional Dutch folk, the regal pomp of the high church, rock and a blend of classics. The band were soon spotted and hired for a stint in the Amsterdam production of the controversially risqué stage musical *Hair*. The show was heavily featured on television and in the media and played to sold out houses in front of people attracted by the controversy of full frontal nudity in a live environment, even in Amsterdam. The band soon began to develop their ideas and started to write material that eventually went towards their first album. However before this could fully evolve another part piece of the puzzle had to arrive.

'[Thijs van Leer] is a classical player originally. He was always multi-dimensional, playing both folk and jazz. And Focus was multi-dimensional in this style.'

PIERRE VAN DER LINDEN

Jan Akkerman had already played guitar in bands Brainbox and Hunter and brought to the fledgling group a fresh guitar sound and skill. He soon became an integral part of the band and quickly established a reputation within the Focus story that remains to this day.



'Blues has always been the most important ingredient for me, specially the passion and the drive to create something out of nothing.'
– Jan Akkerman

Jan Akkerman brought to the trio a whole range of guitar playing skills and styles that allowed the group to move in various tangents that helped them become a ground-breaking band. The other members of that early manifestation of the band were Martin Dresden and Hans Cleuver, both extremely competent musicians capable of holding down a solid basis despite the music's numerous intricacies of time changes and twists in style.

Focus Plays Focus, the band's first studio album, was recorded in early 1970, and released eight months later in September.

The album was renamed *In and Out of Focus* for its international re-release from 1971 onwards, and now included their debut single *House of the King*. The album featured a complicated mix of styles, something that the public found difficult to warm to, and the release received a mixed commercial and critical response.

This was partly due to its short length, remembering that this was the era of lengthy releases and heavy production, and partly due to some shaky vocals – van Leer felt the vocals suffered as a result of singing English lyrics with a foreign accent. In hindsight it was a shame that the band did not follow it's instincts and have the confidence to make the album largely instrumental. This was the path that they eventually took and it was this turning point that transformed Focus into the legend that they are today. The album opens with a sound that set the scene, laced with van Leer's flute and keyboards combined with Akkerman's guitar. But unfortunately not all of the rest of the band were as compatible sonically. Throughout the recording process Akkerman had become dissatisfied with the input of Dresden and Cleuver as a rhythm section, and actually threatened to quit unless they were removed from the band.

'It's funny because I studied a lot of classical piano, organ and flute, but I never studied yodelling. And it made me famous throughout the world. It's really funny.'

THIJS VAN LEER

Dresden and Cleuver had been founding members alongside van Leer, and he was therefore reluctant to part ways with them in this manner. The group attempted to remedy the situation by bringing in a new manager, Yde de Jong, in the hope that he could mediate between the parties. Unfortunately this proved unsuccessful, and Cleuver and Dresden did part ways with the group, leaving Akkerman and van Leer to join up with Akkerman's former Brainbox bandmate Pierre van der Linden, and Cyril Havermans, with whom Akkerman had also worked. This new group went forward under the name Focus and began rehearsals for their next album at Groeneveld Castle in Baarn.

The rehearsals proved fruitful and the new line-up travelled to the UK in April 1971 to record *Focus II* (or *Moving Waves* as it is known internationally.) The sessions took place at Morgan Studios and Sound Techniques in London, and the new group seemed to settle quickly into a comfortable groove. All of them exceedingly competent musicians, the collaboration quickly dove into radical experimentation, bringing together a variety of genres and techniques.

The fusion they created, one of progressive rock, classical music and jazz

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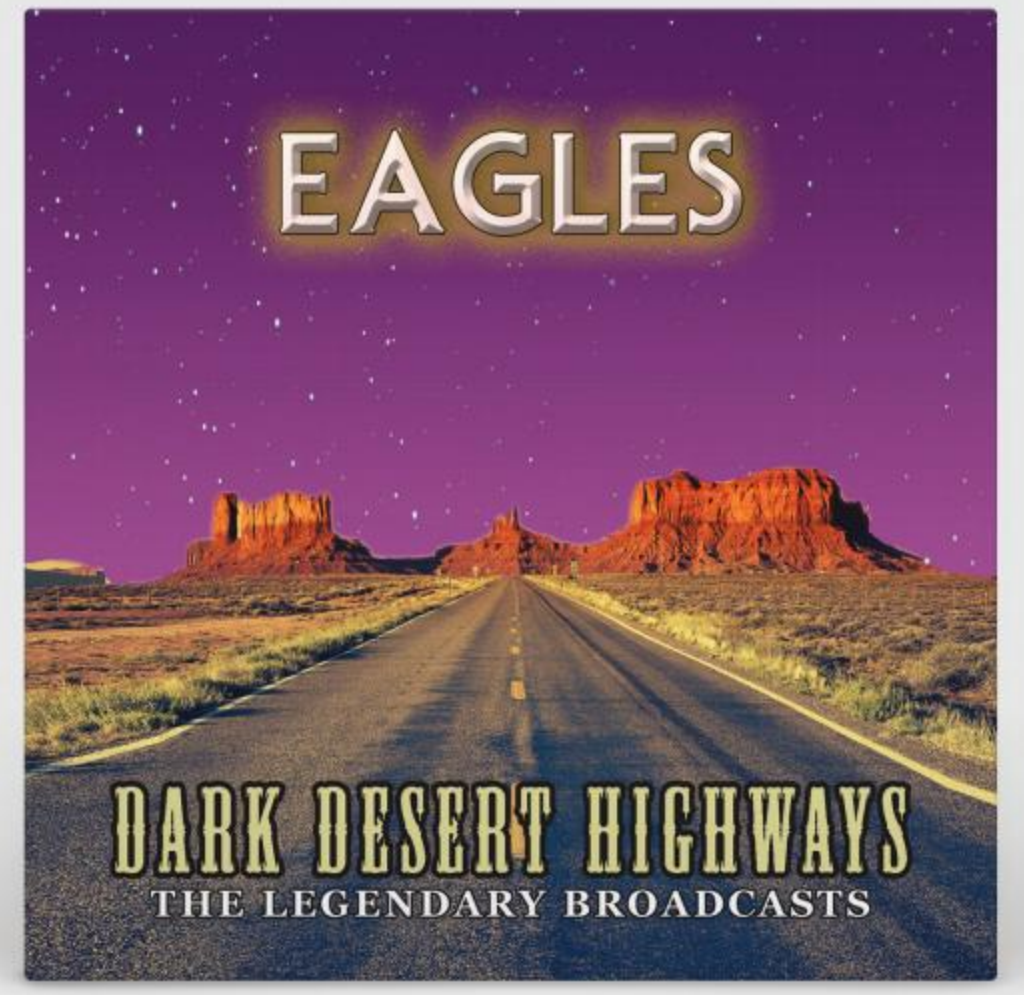

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FEATURED TRACKS INCLUDE:

Peaceful Easy Feeling, **Best of My Love**, **Tequila Sunrise**, **Help Me Thru the Night**, **The Heart of the Matter**, **Love Will Keep Us Alive**, **Learn to Be Still**, **Hotel California**, **Wasted Time**, **Lover's Moon**, **Pretty Maids All In a Row**, **The Girl from Yesterday**, **New York Minute**, **The Last Resort**, **Take It Easy**, **One of These Nights**, **In the City**, **Heartache Tonight**, **Get Over It**, **Desperado** and many more.

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Focus in 1972.
Left to right: Jan Akkerman (guitar), Pierre van der Linden (drums, percussion), Thijs van Leer (vocals, keyboards, flute) and Bert Ruiter (bass, backing vocals).

proved a hit. Focus found themselves with their first international breakthrough: *Focus II* hit the charts reaching the Top 10 in the Netherlands, the US and falling just short of the No. 1 spot in the UK, peaking at No. 2. Focus, complete with their yodelling keyboard-playing flutist, had captured the public imagination. They soon appeared on television across Europe, and more crucially gained a lot of airplay on such stations as the influential Radio Luxembourg.

The album's opening track, the wonderfully bizarre *Hocus Pocus*, became one of the band's best known tracks. Clearly the song *Hocus Pocus* is one of the most memorable Focus tracks of all and even though it is immediately recognisable and seemingly burnt into the memory it is well worth re-visiting here. The drumming is nothing short of exceptional, driving the track through numerous time changes and the intricacies of typical Focus twists and turns. Jan Akkerman, who cowrote the track with Thijs van Leer, literally scorches his way through the various guitar solos and of course hits you with that riff. Thijs van Leer's vocals are nothing short of unforgettable and yet in amongst all the eccentricity he produces a section of flute that gives a hint of what the band is really capable of. Totally absorbing, exciting and bizarre this track demands that you remember it.

Hocus Pocus grabs the listener's attention from the outset when Akkerman launches into the powerful opening riff, and yet the album develops in an entirely unexpected direction. It is experimental, brave, absorbing, wonderfully crafted and memorable – and it is that last word that really makes the difference. With a switch of direction that is nothing short of remarkable, the album moves onto the Jan Akkerman written *Le Clochard*, with it's beautifully constructed and exquisitely haunting Spanish theme layered over an orchestral backdrop. In time it became apparent that this track was nearer to the studio Focus than their two major hits. Their respect for the classics is apparent and it is a track that is written and produced in such a way that it is clear that the musicianship within the band is of an exceptionally high standard. This was no ordinary rock group just rewriting the tried and tested. This was a band that was clearly capable of producing mini musical masterpieces as evocative as the art produced by the many wonderful painters that had come from the same country. Next comes *Janis*, another classily interwoven Akkerman work of art that showcases van Leer's flute playing, and again the high musicianship

of each of the band members. Sophisticated and melancholy it follows on perfectly from *Le Clochard*. Jan Akkerman could swoop and soar during his various much loved guitar solos but he has a range and depth of playing that is second to none. Again the next track, the international title track *Moving Waves*, sits comfortably in the structure of the album and is a rare vocal offering from a band seemingly far more comfortable and effective in an instrumental format. Having said that, the words of this piece are worth their presence on the album and provide a gentle but effective interlude. 'Because behind our individual actions there is one impulse working/the desire to reach upwards'.

Now the next track, the wonderfully constructed *Focus II*, starts. From the pen of the multitalented van Leer, there are the now-typical classical themes until Jan Akkerman scorches in on guitar. The music then develops a soft jazz feel containing some excellently understated drumming. When listening to this piece it is almost as if the band are there surrounding you, maybe in a bar or in the studio, such is the quality of the production. *Focus II* ends all to quickly at a little over four minutes leaving a small feeling of frustration that the themes developed within it weren't fully explored. This is immediately explained by *Eruption*, a twenty-three minute epic divided into sixteen sections of recurring themes. Focus was busy tapping into such a rich vein of creativity that this album could so easily have been a double. The listener gets the feeling that somewhere hidden on lost studio tapes in a basement in the Netherlands, there exists some more work of this extraordinary quality. *Eruption* is, without question, a masterpiece. The recurring themes of *Orfeus*, *Answer*, *Pupilla* and *Euridice* showcase everything to admire in this band. *Eruption* also contains the exquisite *Tommy*, a track that saw Akkerman at his best and which became part of the live act for many years subsequently. Akkerman once again burns and the jazz underpinning, constant mood changes and free flow of movement puts this on a par with anything being written at that time.

Between the recording and release of *Focus II*, the band underwent further line-up changes. Van der Linden left for a short spell over payment disputes, and Haverman handed in his notice in June 1971. He left the band in September and was replaced on the bass by Bert Ruiter.

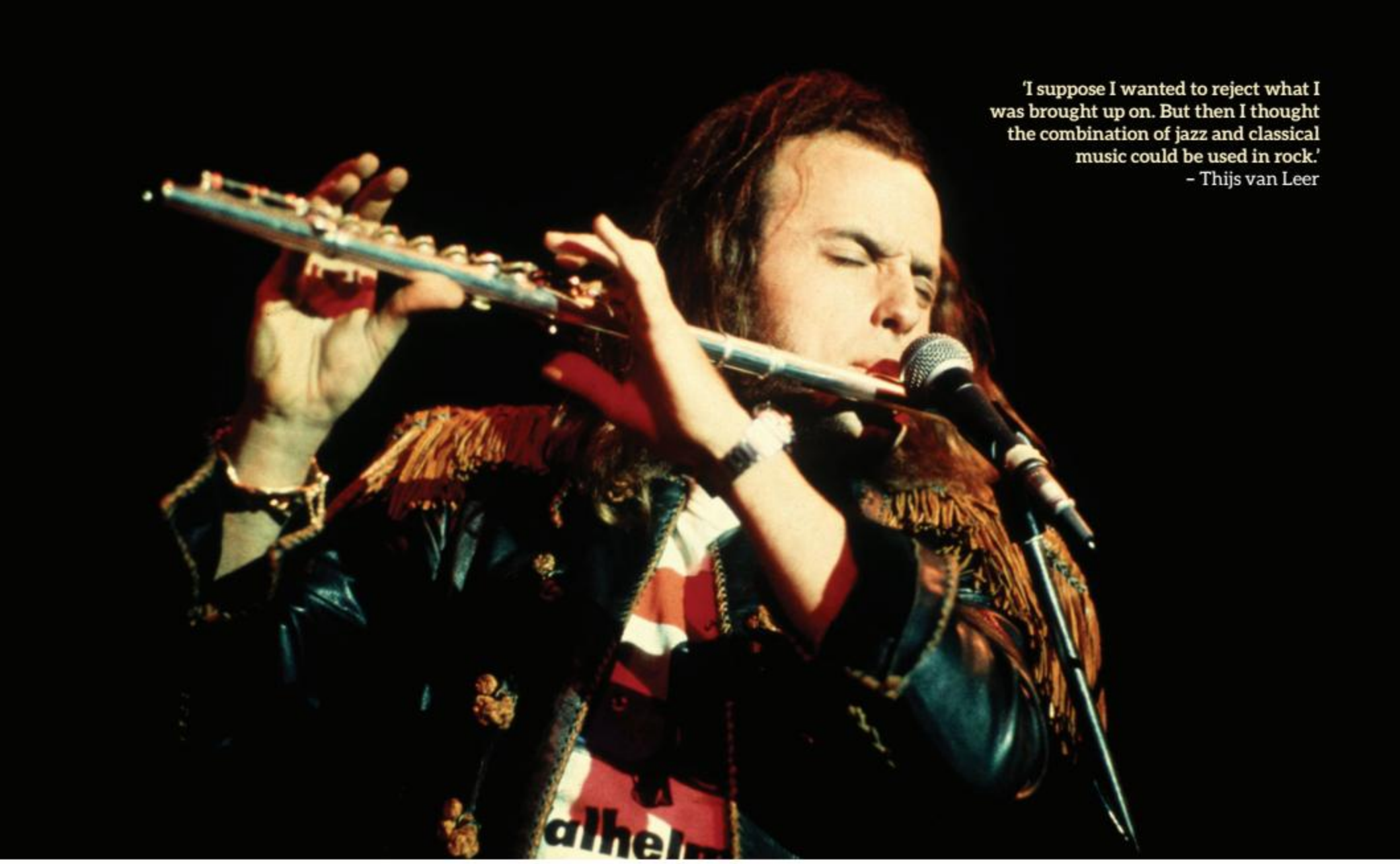
Following these disturbances, Focus resumed as a live act in September 1971; they travelled Europe and visited the UK for the first time in February 1972. Despite concerns about their reception the performances were well received and they became firm favourites on the gigging and festival scene. This was in spite of a disappointment for Focus when they were scheduled to play the 40,000 capacity Lincoln Festival, but arrived too late for their slot. Akkerman has since downplayed their success joking that the gigs 'were packed because it was probably the only thing that was going on'.

Focus followed their live success with a performance on the popular BBC show *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and appearances in numerous music magazines. The UK was fast becoming a second home to the band and they settled in to Olympic Studios in Barnes, London to record their next album – *Focus III*. Incredibly the album was recorded over a period of just four days, but performed well commercially and critically, reaching No. 6 in the UK, No. 35 in the US and securing the band their all important first No. 1 in the Netherlands.

Once again the album was largely written by Akkerman and van Leer, with additional contributions from Bert Ruiter and Pierre van der Linden. It was released at arguably the pinnacle of the band's popularity. This peak was fully captured on 5 May 1973 when the band was recorded live at London's Rainbow. This resulted in several awards from the music media, including the Trendsetters Award from America's Billboard and *Melody Maker*'s Brightest Hope Award in the UK. It was *Melody Maker* that memorably described their music as evolutionary not revolutionary.

Focus III starts off with *Round Goes the Gossip*. Slightly breathless and frantic with more unique Focus vocal treatment, this leads into the delightful *Love Remembered* by Jan Akkerman. A typical interplay between guitar, flute and orchestra with several rich influences becomes apparent despite it's slightly cheesy production. This gives way to the glorious *Sylvia*, a track written by van Leer that manages to epitomise Jan Akkerman's ability to conjure up guitar riffs that are simply unforgettable. *Sylvia* is three-and-a-half minutes of total Focus magic that includes the uniquely famous Thijs van Leer vocal approach. As a single this track literally conquered the airwaves, and, as a result of the extensive airplay it enjoys, seems as familiar now as it was back then. It is literally burnt into the memory, every note, every chord and, of course, that wonderful Akkerman riff. Next up is another van Leer contribution, the full-on classically inspired *Carnival Fugue*. This is yet another beautifully crafted piece opening with characteristically wonderful interplay between van Leer's piano and Akkerman's guitar. This eventually gives way to the jazz fusion sound that was becoming an increasingly strong part of the all round Focus experience.

The eponymous *Focus III* is another van Leer composition, this time lasting a glorious six minutes and providing an enduring, yet all too brief moment on the album. There is no doubt that van Leer was heavily inspired when writing his contributions to this album. The maturity and knowledge contained within the writing on this track is second to none. Once again each individual band member provides a performance that is first rate and amongst the best



'I suppose I wanted to reject what I was brought up on. But then I thought the combination of jazz and classical music could be used in rock.'
– Thijs van Leer

musicianship you could ever wish to hear. A sublimely brilliant Focus moment, well worth revisiting once again if you haven't heard it for a while. It can only leave you bemoaning the fact that shortly afterwards, the two key players in this wonderfully balanced band developed disagreements that resulted in a professional split. Meanwhile, a wonderfully smooth movement into Jan Akkerman and Bert Ruiter's epic *Answers? Questions! Questions? Answers!* takes you all together more deeply into the now fully developed world and sound of Focus. This, at nearly fourteen minutes, is the central piece of the album and is once again superbly constructed with a live feel to it, displaying the instinctive understanding between all the players.

Being almost impossible to follow, *Answers? Questions! Questions? Answers!* eventually gives way to Jan Akkerman's Elizabethan inspired *Elspeth of Nottingham* a track that once again showcases his range and mastery of just about every conceivable guitar style and sound. Then comes the huge *Anonymus II*. Co-written by van Leer and Akkerman along with Pierre van der Linden, it is a massive piece of over twenty-six minutes. Van der Linden's contribution here cannot be overlooked – sadly he left shortly after the live Rainbow recording and was replaced by the ex-John Mayall's Bluesbreakers member Colin Allen.

The punchy opening section of *Anonymus II* mercifully surrenders to a superbly executed and lengthy bass guitar-led interlude. This, very slowly and gradually builds up in tension, pace and mood until once again the band, blending together into a wonderfully cohesive unit, soars into a crescendo. Jan Akkerman roars powerfully back into the piece in typical style to take control as the band power away with all guns blazing. All the elements are present, with Focus on full tilt before suddenly giving way to a fantastically challenging van der Linden drum solo that acts as if to underline that each member is essential to the whole. A dramatic conclusion brings this epic to an end. At the close of all of this, it is as if the listener has been transported to some other time zone and that you have lost nearly half an hour. *Anonymous II* ends the album with a huge chunk of unbroken vinyl.

1974 saw Focus continue their run of hits with the release of the excellent *Hamburger Concerto*, but unfortunately it was a downhill spiral from there creatively. By March 1976, both van der Linden and Akkerman had once more left the group, and it was clear that Focus could no longer function as the creative force they once were.

Focus officially disbanded in 1978, but have continued to reform and tour in the subsequent years. They even released an album – *Focus 11* – as recently as January 2019 and can be seen on tour around the UK during 2020. One must applaud their virility and passion after all these years, and it is an excellent opportunity to see one of the most unique bands that has ever come out of the Netherlands. To this day they remain integral in expanding the scope of the listening public; without their input in the early seventies, the music scene would certainly be a far duller place.

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FEATURED TRACKS INCLUDE:

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RUSH

FAREWELL NEIL PEART

A TRIBUTE AND RETROSPECTIVE

In 1975 Rush hit the big time and became the most popular cult band in North America. In January of this year they lost their iconic drummer and longtime friend Neil Peart to cancer, here we celebrate his life and the legacy of the band that he left behind.

Neil Peart, the iconic drummer of Rush, passed away on 7 January 2020. He was best known for his incredible drumming and poignant lyricism. When he left Rush in 2015, he left a hole that proved impossible to fill, and the world of music mourns his tragic passing.

On 10 September 2020, Rush issued the following statement:

'It is with broken hearts and the deepest sadness that we must share the terrible news that on Tuesday our friend, soul brother and band mate of over forty-five years, Neil, has lost his incredible brave three-and-a-half year battle with brain cancer… Rest in peace brother.'

Neil Peart was born in September 1952 in Port Dalhousie in Ontario, Canada. He had a passion for music from a young age, getting into trouble at school and at home for his constant drumming on tables and desks. From the age of thirteen he participated in various regional bands, but decided his future lay in England and moved there at the age of eighteen. Unfortunately, he found little success in London, where he ended up selling jewellery, and returned to Canada after eighteen months.

'His power, precision, and composition was incomparable. He was called "The Professor" for a reason: We all learned from him.'

DAVE GROHL

Peart was disillusioned by his lack of progress in the music business on his return to Canada, but never gave up. He supported himself working for his father selling tractor parts whilst he pursued a career in a local band called Hush. They toured the Southern Ontario bar circuit and small local venues. In 1974, the turning point in Peart's career came when he was asked to audition for the Toronto band Rush as a replacement for their then-drummer, John Rutsey. Peart made quite an impression on his fellow bandmates, making a haphazard entrance, fresh from his father's farm. As Geddy Lee told *The Guardian* in 2018, **'He was very tall, lanky. And he had short hair. All of us had major hair… he had just moved back home and given up his dream of playing in a rock band… He drove up in this little sports car, drums were hanging out from every corner. He comes in, this big goofy guy with a small drum kit with 18-inch bass drums. Alex [Lifeson] and I were**

'What is a master but a master student? There's a responsibility on you to keep getting better.' – Neil Peart

'Neil pushes that band, which has a lot of musicality, a lot of ideas crammed into every eight bars — but he keeps the throb, which is the important thing. And he can do that while doing all kinds of cool shit.' – Stewart Copeland

chuckling – we thought he was a hick from the country. And then he sat down behind this kit and pummelled the drums, and us. I'd never heard a drummer like that, someone with that power and dexterity. As far as I was concerned, he was hired from the minute he started playing.'

The mirth of his future bandmates was not lost on Peart, who said in a later interview with *Rolling Stone* that, **'I felt that my entire audition was a complete disaster, I was shocked when they chose me.'**

It is certainly not shocking to anyone who has since heard Peart's astonishing technical brilliance, but Rush got even more than they bargained for when Peart came onboard. He was also a stunning lyricist, although he had not developed the skill much up to this point. The lack of an interest in writing within the band forced his hand, and soon he was the band's primary lyricist. Frontman Geddy Lee never actually wrote a lyric during Peart's time with the band. Of this Lee has reflected, **'It has felt odd at times. It has felt very comfortable at times, at times very uncomfortable. Being an interpreter for Neil has been a singular pleasure of mine and a really difficult job at the same time, because I'm not always on the same page as him. As**

we grew as a band, I became trusted by him to be his sounding board and his editor, and if I couldn't get into a thing, he would leave it alone. That's the beauty of a relationship that lasts.'

Peart enjoyed huge cult success with Rush throughout the late seventies and early eighties. The band reached the peak of their popularity with the 1981 release of *Moving Pictures*. Following this, the band started to wind down for a time and Peart began exploring new directions musically. During this time Peart looked into new ways to expand his drumming skills. This is incredible considering he was thought of as one of the greatest drummers in the industry, but Peart took up lessons with the jazz player Freddie Gruber. In the 1990s Peart went on to create two albums celebrating Buddy Rich – a jazz icon and personal hero of his.

In 1997 tragedy struck for Peart when his then-only daughter Selena was killed in a car accident. Devastated by the news, Peart's first wife Jacqueline succumbed to cancer and died only ten months later. Emotionally destroyed, Peart found he was unable to return to music and Rush were put on hiatus.

As Geddy Lee described it, **'Neil was so powerfully running away from all that pain that it was understandable to me if he didn't want to return to the things that reminded him of the life that had been stolen from him. I didn't think he would return.'**

But return he did, although it was four years before Peart felt ready to retake the stage. Peart's road to recovery began when he met his future wife, photographer Carrie Nuttall. They instantly connected and were married on 9 September 2000.

Peart's public return to the scene came in 2002 with the release of Rush's album *Vapor Trails*. This was followed by an accompanying tour, and Neil stayed involved in music full time until his 2015 retirement. He withdrew from Rush citing tendonitis and shoulder issues: **'It does not pain me to realise that, like all athletes, there comes a time to… take yourself out of the game. I would rather set it aside than face the predicament described in our song *Losing It*.'**

Following his retirement, Rush searched for another drummer but eventually decided that a natural conclusion to the band's career had been reached. It is a testament to the high esteem that fellow drummers hold Peart in, that when Dave Grohl of Nirvana and Foo Fighters fame, was offered the position, he responded, **'I'm not physically or musically capable, but thanks for the offer. That's a whole other animal, another species of drummer.'**

It is also notable that throughout his life Peart was also a prolific author, writing several non-fiction books centring around his travels on the road and experiences with grief and recovery. These have been widely acclaimed by critics, and Neil also collaborated on a number of fiction projects.

It seems that writing was always in his blood and rhythm in his soul. Although the circumstances surrounding his death are tragic, they may yet serve to highlight a devastating disease, and it is his musical legacy that Neil Peart will be remembered for – and for that we all thank him.

Alex Lifeson (left) and Geddy Lee onstage in November 1978.

'I think Rush have always had this reputation, particularly to non-fans, of being an ultra-serious and cerebral group when, in fact, the reverse is true. We don't take ourselves seriously at all. Sure, we take our music seriously, but that's altogether different.'
– Alex Lifeson

Rush was formed in 1968 in Toronto, Canada. The original line-up consisted of Alex Lifeson (guitar), John Rutsey (drums) and Jeff Jones (bassist and vocals), although Jones quickly left the band and was replaced by Geddy Lee. Over the next three years Rush underwent several line-up changes whilst performing small gigs in the local area.

Lee has recalled, **'We were playing a lot of high schools. You'd pull up in Magnetawan, Ontario, set up your gear and start playing and the crowd would be looking at you to say, "What is this? I can't dance to this!" So we started by being unpopular on the high school circuit. And then, when we turned eighteen, we became unpopular on the bar circuit because we were too loud.'**

Rush put out a debut single in 1973, a cover of the Buddy Holly song *Not Fade Away*, but this made little impact. The band placed the blame for this on their record company, Mercury Records and decided to form their own label, which they named Moon Records.

It was not until they gained some airplay of their second single *Working Man* from WMMS Radio in Ohio that Rush were able to generate some interest from the industry. The single was released on their Moon Records label, but seeing that people were starting to take notice, Mercury Records also decided to re-release the single.

'If there was any one achievement, it would be that we've have done it on our own terms.'

ALEX LIFESON

Sensing success, the band quickly released an eponymous debut album, which gained Rush a following and lead to them being booked on a US tour supporting Uriah Heep and Manfred Mann. It was at this time that Rutsey left the band and was replaced by Neil Peart.

The arrival of Peart brought an influx of new ideas and creativity, and the music became more progressive with influences taken from fantasy literature and right wing ideology – in particular the writing of Ayn Rand.

The band scored a hit with their sophomore album *Fly By Night*, but seemed to take the new direction too far with the heavily progressive successor *Caress of Steel*.

The album performed disappointingly commercially and Rush were put under pressure from their record label to produce a more mainstream release. However, Rush refused to bow to these demands and created the excellent *2112*, which featured a twenty-minute title track divided into seven sections. Despite this, the album was the band's first taste of commercial success and their first platinum album in Canada. The release was supported by a hugely successful tour, which featured sell-out dates across Canada. *2112* sold well in excess of three million copies worldwide and peaked at No. 61 in the US charts.

In spite of its commercial success the album was not without its controversies. The ideas of right-wing darling Ayn

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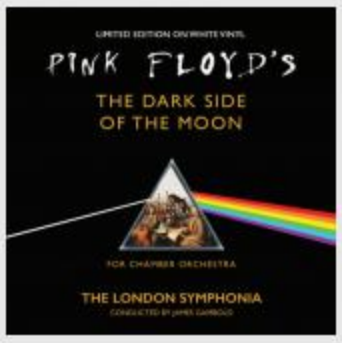

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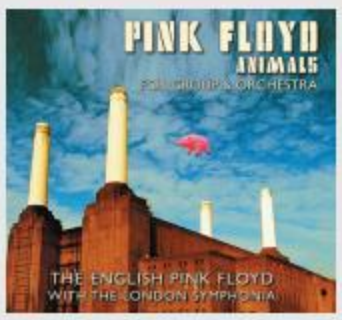

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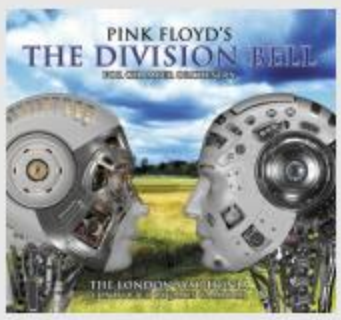

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'I think we're quite unique in that we do have our own sound and approach and we don't really care what's going on elsewhere... we've never wanted to be part of another trend or movement.'
– Alex Lifeson

Rand, a writer and philosopher who captured the attention of many during the Cold War era, heavily inspired the work. Rush credited 'her genius' in the liner notes, and were very vocal about their respect for her ideology. As Geddy Lee enthused, **'I think she's brought forth a lot of concepts and philosophies that have confirmed for us a lot of different things. I've just found it very positive. I've found it very positive. I've found a lot of truth in what she writes.'**

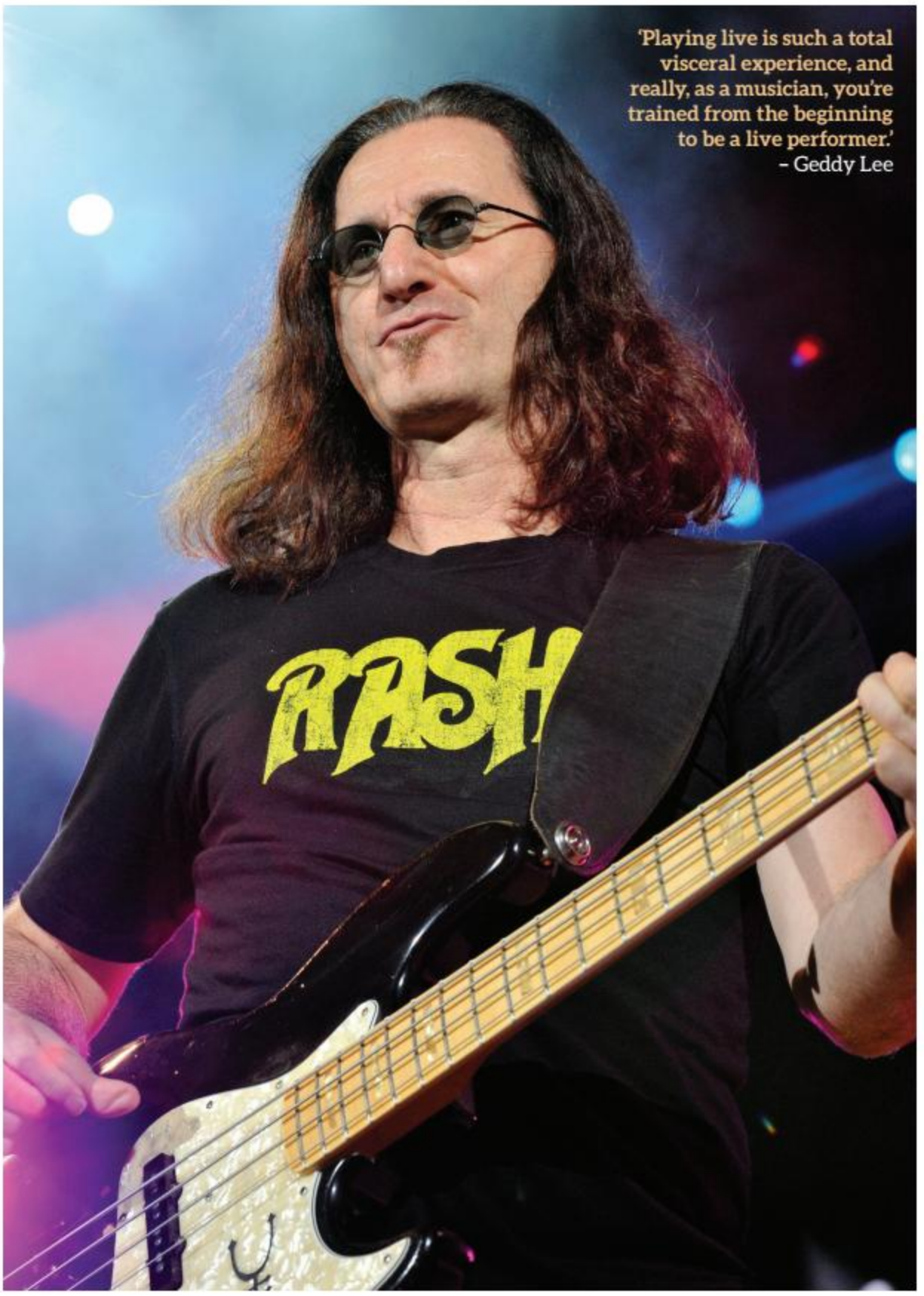
This resulted in a particularly scathing piece in the *NME*, which centred on the band's political beliefs and damaged their reputation in the UK.

Nevertheless Rush regrouped, and began recording at Rockfield Studios in Wales. Here they continued to experiment with increasingly progressive music, creating *A Farewell to Kings* in 1977 and *Hemispheres* in 1978.

As Neil Peart told *NME* in 1978, **'Hard rock is our kind of music, the music we grew up on. It's what comes naturally to us. We just look at it as something that we're trying to keep contemporary. We're not trying to play the music of the late sixties. We're trying to play the music of the late seventies – which has grown out of the sixties. We're trying to take a modern approach, in the way the Beatles took a modern approach to Chuck Berry and so on... for us, the people we followed were Jeff Beck, The Who, Cream, Hendrix – mainly British bands.'**

Rush then moved into a more modern, synthesiser-based sound, and released the album *Permanent Waves* in 1980. A more commercial sound and truncated song lengths helped to make this Rush's first Top 5 album in the US. This was followed by *Moving Pictures* in 1981, which saw Rush reach the peak of their popularity with music that was developed yet not rambling. As Peart told *Rolling Stone* magazine. **'When punk and new wave came, we were young enough to gently incorporate it into our music, rather than getting reactionary about it – like other musicians who I heard saying, "What are we supposed to do now, forget how to play?" We were fans enough to go, "Oh, we want that too." And by *Moving Pictures*, we nailed it, learning how to be seamlessly complex and to compact a large arrangement into a concise statement.'**

The album was Rush's biggest hit, reaching No. 3 and going quadruple platinum in the US. This was buoyed by the single *Tom Sawyer*, Rush's most recognisable hit. Having reaped the popularity their new, more electronic sound brought, Rush continued to



'Playing live is such a total visceral experience, and really, as a musician, you're trained from the beginning to be a live performer.'
– Geddy Lee

experiment with increasingly synthesised sounds on their next studio album.

Following the release of a live album *Exit… Stage Left*, Rush began recording their new album *Signals* at Le Studio, Quebec in April 1982. It proved their most difficult yet, as they struggled to refine the new sound that they were looking for. As Peart told *Rollling Stone*, **'A lot of the early fantasy stuff was just for fun. Because I didn't believe yet that I could put something real into a song. *Subdivisions* happened to be an anthem for a lot of people who grew up under those circumstances, and from then on, I realised what I most wanted to put in a song was human experience.'**

The aforementioned *Subdivisions* was one of three singles that were released from the album, the others being *Countdown* and *New World Man*. *New World Man* proved to be Rush's biggest hit to date; it went to No. 1 in Canada and was their highest charting single ever in the United States.

Following the completion of *Signals*, Rush parted ways with their long-time producer Terry Brown. He had been with the band since 1974, but did not support the new direction the music was taking, being more comfortable with heavy guitars than synthesisers.

Rush then partnered with producer and engineer Peter Henderson to help create their next album, 1984's *Grace Under Pressure*. This was another heavily synthesised album, with elements of reggae and new wave incorporated. The album performed well, and Rush continued to explore this sonic style with their next two releases *Power Windows* (1985) and *Hold Your Fire* (1987). These were produced by Peter Collins, but *Hold Your Fire* saw a decline in commercial popularity. The album still performed respectably, yet Rush seemed to have exhausted the potential of their new style and they ended the decade looking at a return to a more guitar-oriented sound.

Rush released *Presto* in 1989, cementing their move away from their previous keyboard heavy sound. Although their albums still featured synthesisers, they became far more guitar-driven over time. Throughout the 1990s they released *Roll the Bones* (1991), *Counterparts* (1993) and *Test for Echo* (1996). The latter two albums were produced by Peter Collins once more and performed well commercially, with *Counterparts* reaching No. 2 in the US charts. The band embarked on a vast North American tour titled An Evening with Rush in 1996, which concluded in July 1997.

'I would be naive not to recognise the number of musicians who tell me they have been influenced by me and sight me - as well as Alex and Neil - as a musician who has been a positive influence on their playing.'
– Geddy Lee

It was just one month after the conclusion of this tour that tragedy struck for Neal Peart with the death of his daughter, this was then followed by his wife's passing and Rush went on hiatus indefinitely. A live album dedicated to Selena and Jacqueline was released in 1998, but the future for Rush looked bleak indeed at this time.

Peart eventually worked through his grief and returned to Rush in 2002, but after so much time away the band found it hard to pick up where they left off and opted for a new direction. This new sound was actually far more reminiscent of their early work, and saw Rush create their first album without synthesisers in nearly thirty years. *Vapor Trails* was released in May 2002, and Rush embarked on a triumphant comeback tour, on which they played to the largest crowds of their career. The last night of this tour at the Maracanã Stadium in Rio was recorded and released as the three-disc live album and DVD *Rush in Rio* in 2003. The album proved an enormous success: it was nominated for a Grammy Award and has been certified seven times platinum in the US. Rush were back on the road in 2004, when they celebrated the band's thirtieth birthday by releasing *Feedback*, an album of covers dedicated to their musical inspirations, and embarking on the R30 Tour of North America and Europe. Despite the fact that they had now been producing music for over three decades, Rush showed no signs of slowing down and released a new album *Snakes & Arrows* in May 2007. The release was warmly received, spawning two successful singles; *Snakes & Arrows* debuted at No. 3 in the US charts. The band once again hit the road and were on tour in various countries throughout 2007 and 2008.

The publicity from *Snakes & Arrows* and the ensuing tours saw Rush enjoy a resurgence in public popularity in 2008, and the band capitalised on this, making numerous TV and film appearances in the US.

Rush were again on the road during 2010 and 2011 with the Time Machine Tour, before releasing a new album *Clockwork Angels* in 2012. This was sadly Rush's last studio album, as following the supporting tour Lifeson stated the band were taking some time off: **'We've committed to taking about a year off. We all agreed when we finished this tour we were going to take this time off and we weren't going to talk about band stuff or make any plans. We committed to a year, so that's going to take us through to the end of next summer, for sure. That's the minimum.'**

Rush embarked on the R40 Tour celebrating Neal Peart's fortieth anniversary with the band in summer 2015. Sadly following the end of the tour Peart was forced to retire from Rush citing arthritis and tendinitis. The announcement was made in December 2015, and despite Lifeson suggesting the band may continue, Rush was no more.

This brought to a close an incredible career spanning forty years. It had been a formative and emotional journey for both Rush and their fans. Rush's continued popularity today, shows the dedication of both a new generation and diehard fans. They have long been North American heroes and their impact on the many bands that followed them, ensures that Rush will not be forgotten any time soon.

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SLADE

LOOK WOT THEY DUN

Slade were the in-your-face working class heroes of the early 1970s. In a time when they seem to only be wheeled out every December, it is easy to forget that for a period of three years they dominated the UK charts completely. Here we look back at their rise to fame and glory days during 1971–1974.

Slade left to right: Don Powell (drums), Dave Hill (lead guitar, backing vocals), Jim Lea (bass, piano, violin, backing vocals) and Noddy Holder (lead vocals, rhythm guitar).

'Noddy Holder's got one of greatest voices in rock ever.'
– Ozzy Osbourne

Slade are synonymous with colour and noise. Yet the vibrant band were founded amidst the rather dull surroundings of the Black Country during the late 1960s. Anyone familiar with the area will no doubt associate it more with vast industrial landscapes than sparkling silver platform boots.

But it was here that the story of Slade began with a young drummer named Don Powell. In 1964, Powell joined a band called the Vendors, where he met guitarist Dave Hill. Hill had always enjoyed as love of music, as he recalled in his 2017 autobiography *So Here It Is*, **'As a kid I always responded to music. We had a little wind-up gramophone, and sometimes I'd take it out the front on the grass and play it. We had this record *Lollipop* and I'd play it really loud, just to annoy the neighbours. "David Hill, shut that row up!" We didn't have many records, though my dad was quite into classical music.'**

After coming across a young Noddy Holder performing in an act called Steve Brett & the Mavericks, Powell decided he would be perfect to join the band that was now called the 'N Betweens. Jim Lea had already been brought in on bass, and after some persuasion Holder also agreed. Slade was beginning to take shape. As Holder has put it, **'When Dave asked me to join the 'N Betweens, I don't think he'd ever seen me perform. It was drummer Don Powell and roadie Graham Swinnerton who were singing my praises to him… Dave did put his case very well. He wanted the new band to have a big colourful image, and that was right up my street. He wanted three lead guitar players, even on bass. He also wanted to get away from the straight blues format their band had been known for. All this suited me perfectly.'**

> 'WE WERE ON TOP OF THE POPS SO MUCH WE ALMOST BECAME THE HOUSE BAND.'
>
> NODDY HOLDER

The 'N Betweens became Ambrose Slade, and under this name they released an unsuccessful debut album titled *Beginnings*. Although the album flopped, the title was prophetic, as it really was the beginning of something big for the young musicians. During the recording of *Beginnings* Ambrose Slade were visited by ex-Animals bassist and Hendrix manager, Chas Chandler. Chandler agreed to come onboard as manager, and began several unsuccessful attempts to launch the band's career. These included a new skinhead look for the band, the truncated name 'Slade' and a move to the high profile label Polydor.

During this time Slade released two singles, and the album *Play It Loud*, all of which failed to make an impression on the charts. It was not until 1971, when Chas Chandler suggested recording a version of a live favourite, the Bobby Marchan song *Get Down and Get With It* that Slade finally broke in to the UK Top 20. This ushered in a succession of hits for Slade, and their second appearance on *Top of the Pops*, promoting *Cuz I Luv You* brought their new glam rock look to the masses. Slade had finally found the magic formula and the single shot to No. 1 in the UK charts. The misspelt title of

'I never had any thoughts of being a rock star, even though everybody always thinks I just wanted to be the centre of attention. I was just fascinated by trying to work out how to play the guitar.' – Dave Hill (right)

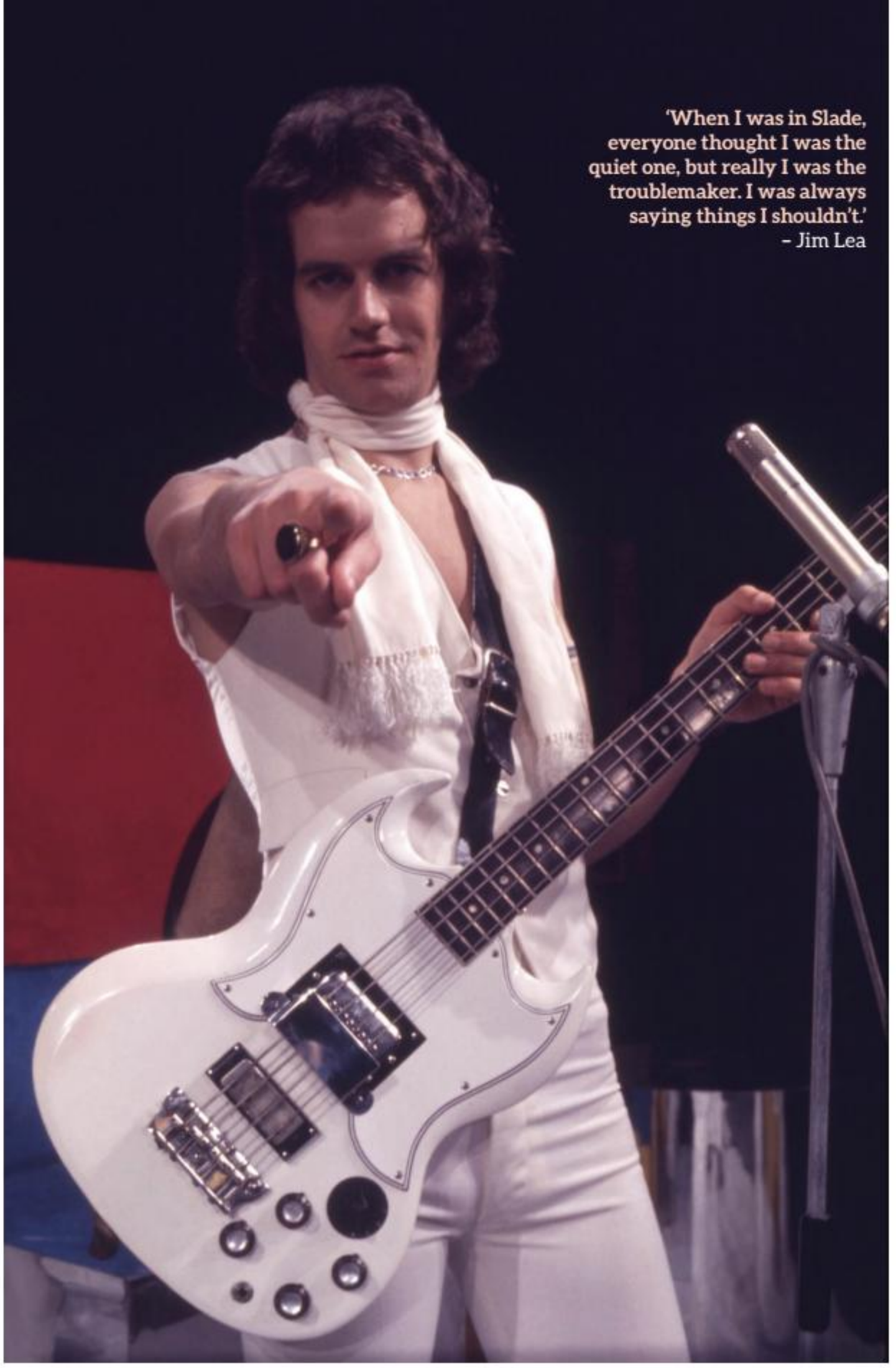
the song fitted Slade's image as lovable 'yobs' perfectly, and became a signature of the band; their follow up was the very successful *Look Wot You Dun*.

1972 saw Slade riding high in the charts with the release of their raucous live album *Slade Alive!*, recorded over three nights in front of 300 diehard fans, the album captured the magic of Slade onstage. Slade combined all the pomp of glam rock with the yob culture of their working class roots. It was an onstage riot that captured the imagination of the public and fired up audiences, with the crowds rocking as hard as the band.

It was a meteoric rise for Slade; the young blue-collar lads rose to the upper echelons of rock stardom in a matter of years. *Take Me Bak 'Ome* and *Mama Weer All Crazee Now* both shot to No. 1 in the charts, meaning Slade had now enjoyed three No. 1 singles in the space of just a year. Their next album *Slayed?* enjoyed similar success, going to No. 1 in the UK and Australia, where Slade were massively popular. The releases were also beginning to make an impact in the US, although in America Slade never reached the heights of fame that they enjoyed elsewhere. Their next single *Gudbuy T' Jane* charted just shy of the No. 1 spot in the UK, but only managed to reach No. 68 in the States. This finished off an incredible year for Slade, but there was much more to come in 1973.

Slade stormed into the new year with the release of *Cum On Feel the Noize*, one of their most distinctive and best loved tracks. Bassist Jim Lea stated that the idea behind the hits *Mama Weer All Crazee Now* and *Cum On Feel the Noize* came from seeing Chuck Berry in concert the year before. He had been awed by the connection between the performer and the crowd, and saw the power that audience participation could hold. It was this that inspired the band to create the foot stomping, chanted choruses; they were an opportunity for the listener to really get involved and to 'feel the noize'. Dave Hill has reflected, **'The song was based around audiences and things that were happening to us. They were just experiences. Obviously, when you are on the road, you are writing about being on the road, you're writing about what's going on.'** This approach certainly proved a success, and when *Cum On Feel the Noize*, shot straight to No. 1, it was the first single to do so since the Beatles released *Get Back* four years prior.

Slade continued their winning streak with the release of their next single



'When I was in Slade, everyone thought I was the quiet one, but really I was the troublemaker. I was always saying things I shouldn't.'
– Jim Lea

Skweeze Me, Pleeze Me, which also went to No. 1. Slade were on top of the world, performing on sellout tours and television shows constantly. It was a whirlwind time that saw the band on the road almost nonstop, as Holder has since stated, **'Even now when we meet people and they tell us of the effect we were having at the time, we can't believe it. We were in our own little bubble in our real heyday. We couldn't go out to the cinema or go shopping anything like that. It was just us, our roadies – our entourage, if you like – and Chas [Chandler]. We didn't really get see everyday life, we were either on the road or in the studio.'**

Unfortunately the bubble had to burst some time and July 1973 brought tragedy to the band. On 4 July drummer Don Powell was involved in a horrific car accident. His Bentley swerved off the road in the early hours of the morning killing his girlfriend Angela Morris, and leaving Don in a coma with terrible injuries. Little is known about the circumstances around the accident, and, as it left Don with permanent damage to his memory, it is not likely that any details will come to light. **'Even today I have no memory of the crash,'** he has stated, **'I remember a girl's birthday party, and opening a bottle of champagne. I can't remember anything leading up to the accident.'**

Up to this point Slade had always been a cohesive unit, and the band were unwilling to continue with their beloved drummer in this way. They did however perform one set at the Isle of Man Festival to fulfil their obligations, as Holder had previously stated **'... the last thing we want to do is to mess around the people who have put us where we are.'** Although Don is still troubled by the injuries from the crash today, he got back on the road as quickly as possible. Slade needed him, and he needed Slade. Holder recalled, **'Don slowly but surely got better. Within six or seven weeks his strength began to return. I remember Chas saying to Don "Do you think you're well enough to play live?" Don was suffering from severe memory loss, but we took him on the road anyway.'**

After a period of recovery, Don rejoined Slade late in the summer of 1973. The band were in New York ready to record what became their biggest hit yet – the infamous *Merry Xmas Everybody*. How the song actually came about has been disputed by various band members over the years. But one thing is for sure,

'It's in a bank vault. I got the idea after I saw Lulu with a sparkly dress, with the light bouncing off it. It's actually an antique coachman's hat with mirrors stuck on. It had its own flight case. I got the hat off a guy in Kensington market, called Freddie. He said, "One day I'm gonna be a big pop star like you." I said, "Fuck off, Freddie." He became Freddie Mercury.'
– Noddy Holder on his famous mirrored top hat

it's certainly the biggest Christmas hit ever. Let alone the biggest one that was apparently written in twenty minutes whilst having shower (as Lea claims) and recorded during a heatwave.

Holder has given his take on the recording: **'We took it to the band and rehearsed it, but they weren't sure. Nobody really did Christmas songs then. Lennon had done one the year before, but he was Lennon. Little did we know that that year Wizzard were doing one and so was Elton John. But we played it to Chas Chandler and he loved it. He said Polydor will be over the moon, but we won't tell them we're doing it until we've finished it, we'll just tell them we've got a new record.'**

Unfortunately the song that was Slade's greatest hit has also proved to be the greatest point of contention amongst the band. As Holder and Lea have sole writing credits, they are the only ones to get a share of the vast royalties. Every Christmas Holder and Lea are said to make £250,000 from airplay of this song, and Holder even refers to it as his pension. This has long been a source of animosity amongst the former-Slade members, and is apparently an issue they can't move past.

Before the release of *Merry Xmas Everybody*, Slade released an unusual number – the piano based *My Friend Stan*. With it's conventionally spelled title, and almost novelty feel one would be forgiven for not recognising it as a Slade single at all. Nevertheless, the single scored the band a No. 1 in Ireland, and a No. 2 hit in the UK, proof that at this time they could do no wrong in the public eyes.

The release of *My Friend Stan* marked the end of an era for Slade. From 1974 their career went into decline. The band made the dubious choice of moving to the States, where they had never managed to emulate their European success. They began touring with big name bands there, and made an album geared towards the tastes of the American public. Coming off the back of so many No. 1 hits in the UK, one might have thought Slade would consider the manta 'If it ain't broke don't fix it'. Unfortunately they did not, and their next album was a considerable disappointment in the charts.

Slade never managed to recapture the in-studio magic of their early albums. And, although they continued to enjoy huge success live, and enjoyed a career revival in 1980, things were never quite the same. Nevertheless, they left a huge impact on the music scene, and there are few people unfamiliar with the signature screeching of the rambunctious Noddy Holder. They were the classic working class heroes, and a walk through their impressive back catalogue proves that Slade are for life – not just for Christmas.

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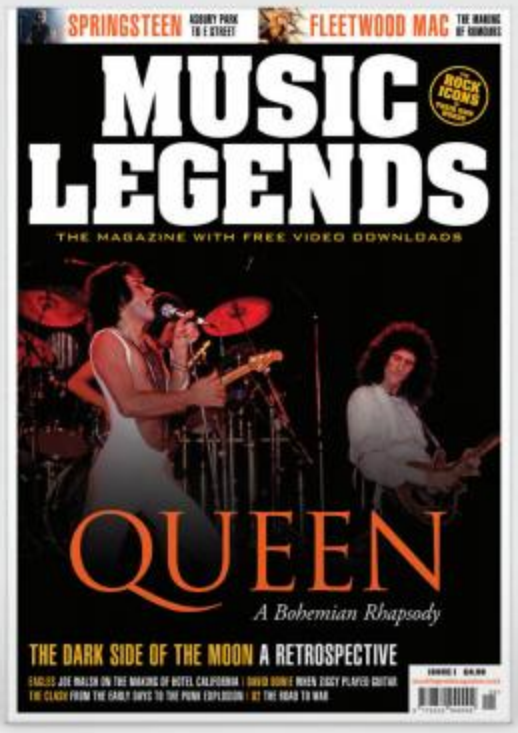

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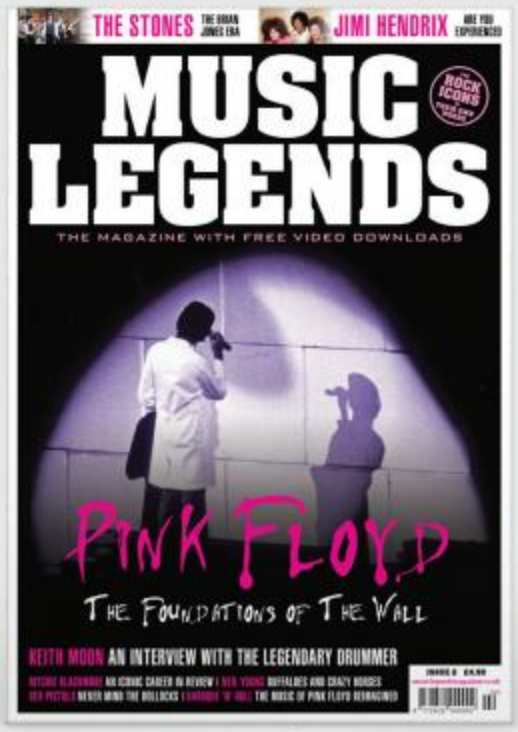

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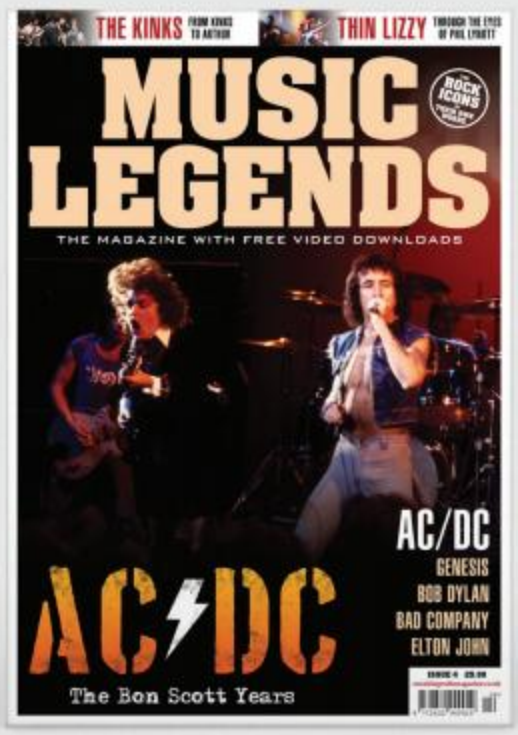

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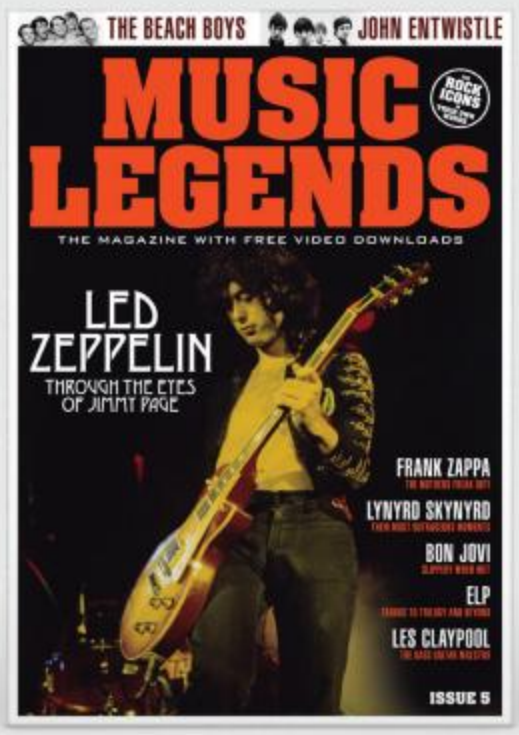

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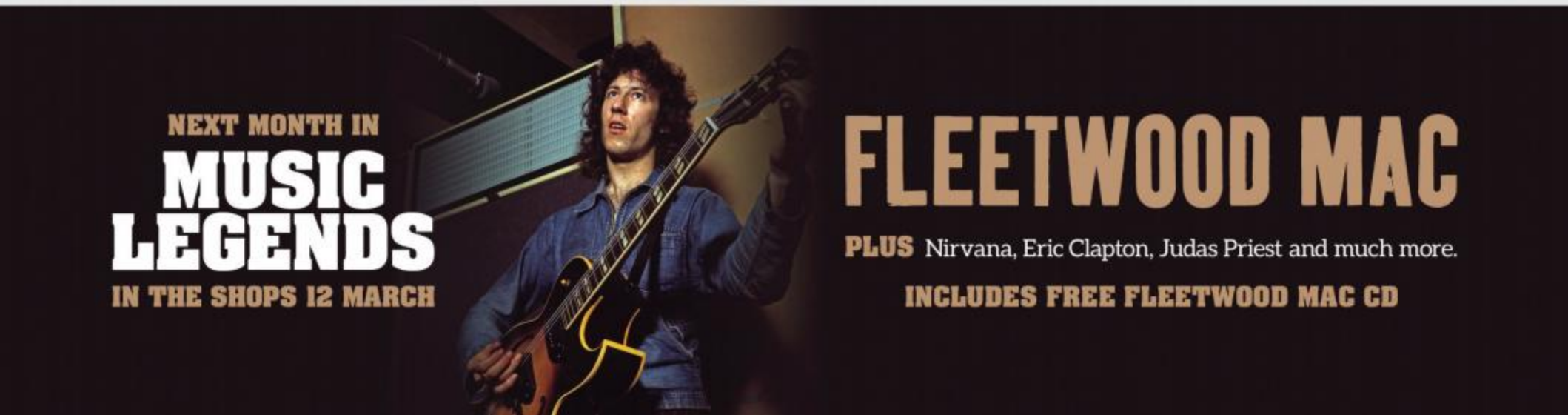
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